

HISTORY OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE

MA SANSKRIT SEMESTER - I

SRIMAD ANDAVAN ARTS & SCIENCE COLLEGE

Compiled & Prepared by,
Dr. Nagarajan.S -
M.A Ph.D Sanskrit, M.A Hindi & ENG
Professor Emeritus
Srimad Andavan Arts & Science College.

eBook prepared by

Prasath.RR

MMSE MHRM MPM

Certified Scrum Master® | Certified SAFe® 6 Agilist | Certified Prince2® Practitioner | Certified ITIL® -
Service Operations & Service Strategy intermediate | Certified Lean® SSYB | Certified DevOps® WB |
Certified Azure business professional®

<https://Sanskrit.epictechskills.com/>

History of Sanskrit Literature

1. INTRODUCTION

Sanskrit is celebrated as the language of the celestials and is referred as 'गीर्वाणी', 'देवभाषा', 'सुरभारती' and 'दैवीवाक्' etc. The word संस्कृतम् may be explained as सम्यक् कृतं संस्कृतम् - a refined language. It was the language of the Āryans who flourished in the Indus valley in the pre-historic times. According to devout Hindus the Vedic literature was not composed by the sages, as claimed by the western scholars. Instead, they were revealed to the world by the Yogic powers of the seers. They are referred as seers (मन्त्रद्रष्टारः), since they visualized the actual hymns.

Both poetry and prose existed in the Vedic period itself. The hymns contained in the संहिता portion of the ऋग्वेदः are referred as सूक्तम् । The hymns are always in verse form only. These hymns are composed in various metres like गायत्री, उष्णिक्, अनुष्टुप्, बृहती, जगती etc. The texts of ब्राह्मण-s of the Yajur Veda are in prose form. While some उपनिषद्-s are in prose form, some others are in verse form.

Around 500 B.C. due to the advent of the vernacular प्राकृत literature were produced in various प्राकृत-s also. Thus the Buddhist literature त्रिपिटकम् and some dramas were composed in पालि and many books of Jainism were composed in अर्धमागधी । This was followed by many dialects like महाराष्ट्री, मागधी, अर्धमागधी, पालि, शौरसेनी etc. Later, due to the

production of literature in these dialects, they developed into independent languages with specialized grammar for them separately.

The history of Sanskrit literature may be broadly divided into three periods - (1) The Vedic period and (2) the Classical period with a (3) Transition period in between. The Transition period includes the Sūtra period and the Epic-Purāna period. This broad classification is based mainly on the type of literature produced and the language pattern. As for the type of literature produced, the literature produced in the Vedic period are related to sacrifices and sacrificial deities and speculative studies. Thus we find that the hymns of the Vedic संहिता-s recited at different stages of the sacrifices and are addressed to various deities like इन्द्रः , अग्निः , पूषन् , विष्णुः , रुद्रः etc. The ब्राह्मण-s contained the sacrificial procedure in prose. The उपनिषद्-s discussed the questions related to theology like eternity of ब्रह्मन् (Brahman). In the classical period, the purpose of literature was recreation to the mind and the eyes, as mentioned in the नाट्यशास्त्रम् ।

Various types of literature like poetry, prose, drama etc. were composed by many poets. In the Transition period, both religious literature and philosophical literature were produced in sūtra style. Besides the epics and Purānas were also produced over a long span of time.

As for the language type is concerned, Vedic language was metrical in nature and punctuated by accents (स्वरः) and followed by a separate set of metres. This is the marked feature which distinguished the Vedic language from the classical Sanskrit. The transition period from Vedic to classical was marked by the production of distinct class of literature called 'Sūtra' and also the epics and the Purānas.

Thus the period of history of Sanskrit literature may be broadly classified as (1) the Vedic period (3000 B.C.- 800 B.C.), (2) the Transition period comprising of Sūtra period (1400 B.C. - 800 B.C.) and the Epic & Purāna period (1400 B.C - 650 A.D.) (3) the Classical period (500 B.C. - upto

the modern times). All the changes in the classical languages upto 600 B.C. or so were codified by पाणिनि: and was supplemented by वररुचि: and explained by पतञ्जलि: (400 B.C.), Thus all the literature produced in the Classical period strictly followed the grammar rules codified by पाणिनि: in his grammar-treatise named 'अष्टाध्यायी' ।

(2) The Vedic Period

(6000 B.C.- 800 B.C.)

The Vedas : The term वेद: is derived from the verbal root विद् - to know. It is a treasure of knowledge which makes known many of the truths that cannot be ascertained or validated by any other means of proof. Vedas are four in number. They are (1) ऋग्वेद: (2) यजुर्वेद: (3) सामवेद: and (4) अथर्ववेद: । Based on its form, the Vedas can be classified into three - (1) the hymns called ऋक् which are in verse form, (2) the prose narration of performance of sacrifices called यजुस् and (3) the hymns set to music called सामन् । This is referred to as त्रयी । According to some others, त्रयी refers to ऋग्वेद: , यजुर्वेद: and सामवेद:, excluding अथर्ववेद: ।

Based on the subject matter dealt with, the Vedic texts may be broadly be grouped under two classes known as कर्मकाण्डम् and ज्ञानकाण्डम् । The कर्मकाण्डम् deals with the performance of sacrifices and the ज्ञानकाण्डम् deals with the speculative or philosophical inquiries.

Four periods of Vedic literature : The Vedic period is roughly estimated between 3000 B.C. and 800 B.C. by Western scholars. But Oriental scholars like Bala Gangadhara Tilak and the Western scholar Jacobi pushed the upper limit to 6000 B.C. or 7000 B.C. The lower limit was also variously fixed between 2500 B.C. to 1500 B.C.

Their estimation is mainly based on the astronomical data found in the Vedic texts, like the position of a particular star or the position of the vernal equinoxes. The traditionalists argue that such astronomical position of stars repeatedly occur after a long cycle. It will be a mistake to presume that the Vedas were composed only during the last occurrence of such constellation position. Further the mention of particular plant or particular animal or season etc, are also misleading, since over a long period the geography of the universe has undergone changes and it will be a mistake to identify the present geographical places with the places mentioned in the Vedic texts, unless the proper name nearly tallies with the name mentioned in the Vedic texts. According to orthodox view, the Vedas are अनादि (eternal) and अपौरुषेयम् (not composed by anybody- human or divine).

Date of Veda
Bala Gangadhara Tilak and other Indian scholars, on a deep study of the Vedas, have assigned different periods for the composition of the Vedic texts. They have divided the period of composition of the Vedas into four.

The first period was from 6,000 B.C. and extending upto 4,000 B.C. Most of the ancient hymns of the ऋग्वेद: and some prose portions of the early ब्राह्मण-s were composed during this period. The first stage of development of Vedic language was represented by संहिता-s. During this period, the literature was creative in spirit and highly poetic in form. Literary poetry had attained a high stage in this period. The hymns of ऋग्वेदसंहिता are in simple language without any artificiality, rich in

imagination and lyrical in nature. It reflects the culture of the Āryans who had settled on the banks of the river called सिन्धु: ।

The second period is between 4,000 B.C. and 2,500 B.C. During the period most of the ritual mantras of the ऋग्वेद: were composed. The hymns composed were first arranged as a compilation called संहिता । संहिता-s are the collection of hymns called ऋक्-s, grouped and arranged into a single book in many chapters. The ऋग्वेदसंहिता is the oldest among the संहिता-s. The earlier portions of the यजुर्वेद: and सामवेद: are also assigned this period. During this period along with hymns, sacrificial procedures were composed in prose in ब्राह्मण-literature.

It was the time of rituals and hence the two important procedure books - तैत्तरीय ब्राह्मणम् and शतपथब्राह्मणम् and the later portions of the यजुर्वेद संहिता are assigned this period. Earliest Sanskrit prose is found in the ब्राह्मण-literature. The ब्राह्मण-s are mainly concerned with the narration of the sacrificial procedures in prose. They further explain the duties to be performed by the four priests (ऋत्विजः)- होता (belonging to ऋग्वेद:) अध्वर्युः (belonging to यजुर्वेद:) उद्गाता (belonging to सामवेद:) and ब्रह्मा (belonging to अथर्ववेद:). The ब्राह्मण-s contains many interesting legends and anecdotes also. From the ब्राह्मण-s, we learn that the Āryans had spread to the Ganges valley, since we get mention to the kingdoms of विदेह: and पाञ्चाल: ।

The third period is between 2,500 B.C. and 1,400 B.C. The third period was mainly marked by the आरण्यक-s. These are the links between the Vedic sacrifices and the philosophy. These are the beginning of the speculation about the nature of the Self. These try to explain the inner meanings of the sacrifices. These books are meant for those pious men who had renounced majority of the sacrificial rituals and retired to the forests.

Hence these books are known as आरण्यकम् (forest books). They contain instructions for the meditation of mystic symbols to be practiced by the साधक-s. Earlier portions of the अथर्ववेदः and some ancient उपनिषत्-s are also assigned this period.

The fourth period is from 1,400 B.C. to 800 B.C. This period intermingles with the period of the वेदाङ्ग-s and the Sūtra literature. The later आरण्यक-s and उपनिषत्-s are assigned this period. The fourth period is mainly marked by the उपनिषत्-s. The speculative inquiry initiated in the आरण्यकम् are discussed seriously in the उपनिषत्-s. In order to explain the intricate subject, they offer many examples taken from the normal life, like merging of honeys collected from various trees, the salt dissolved in the water etc. Majority of the उपनिषत्-s are in the form of dialogue between the preceptor and the disciple or between the king and the Brahmin. The knowledge is not directly revealed to the seeker, but the seeker is guided to meditate and learn the truth in stages. Many उपनिषत्-s are the last portion of the respective आरण्यकम् । Further, some उपनिषत्-s are in prose form and some others are in verse form. The श्रौत and सूत्र literature are assigned to this period. The epics रामायणम् and the earlier stage of the महाभारतम् belong to this period.

Bur A.A. Macdonell and other western scholars assign the period of 1,500 B.C. to 600 B.C as the Vedic age, which is not accepted by orientalists.

Authorship of the Vedas : The tradition claims that the Vedas are eternal and are the very breath of the Lord. They were not composed by any individual or group of people and hence are known as अपौरुषेयम् (not composed by anybody). The Western scholars, on the other hand, feel that the sages whose names are prefixed to the hymns or mantras, are the composers of those hymns or mantras. The orthodox, contradict the above view and contend that the seers,

through their Yogic power, have visualized these ever existing hymns and mantras and had made known to this world.

Of the six systems of philosophy, सांख्यः, मीमांसा and वेदान्त systems consider the Vedas as अपौरुषेयम् (not composed by anybody), whereas न्यायः and वैशेषिकः systems consider the Vedas as पौरुषेयम् (having been composed by the God) and hence are eternal.

When the Western scholars insist a definite period, based on the mention of some personages in the Vedas, the orthodox reply that they represent the general meaning and do not refer to any historical person.

Number of the Vedas : According to the tradition, the Vedas are one only. At the end of every third Age of the cycle of the four Ages (चतुर्युगः), (i.e) at the end of every द्वापरयुगः, the sage व्यासः (compiler or editor) appears and divides the one Veda into four Vedas for the benefit of the people of the कलियुगः, when the study and practice of the Vedas would dwindle. It also claims that so far 26 cycles of four Yugas (चतुर्युग-s) have passed by and at the end of the 27th द्वापरयुगः, Lord विष्णुः himself had born as the sage व्यासः and had edited the one Veda into four. His original name was कृष्णद्वैपायनः, as he was black in colour and was born to the sage पराशरः and सत्यवती in an द्वीपः (island). He divided the Vedas into four, known as ऋग्वेदः, यजुर्वेदः, सामवेदः and अथर्ववेदः । He taught ऋग्वेदः to पैलः, यजुर्वेदः to वैशम्पायनः, सामवेदः to जैमिनिः and अथर्ववेदः to सुमन्तः ।

Contents of the Vedas in brief : Every वेदः or recension (शाखा) of the वेदः has a set of four books, namely, ऋग्वेदः, यजुर्वेदः, सामवेदः and अथर्वणवेदः । The general contents of the four books are mentioned below :

(I) संहिता - The संहिता portion of the Vedas generally contains the hymns in praise of various deities. The deities are classified into three categories -

(1) those who belong to the earth (e.g.) अग्निः ।

(2) those who belong to the sky (e.g.) वायुः, इन्द्रः and

(3) those who belong to the heaven (e.g.) सूर्यः ।

These hymns are applicable in various sacrifices.

(II) ब्राह्मणम् - The ब्राह्मण-s elaborate the science of sacrifice, where all necessary details are furnished for the satisfactory performance of various original and derivative sacrifices. The ब्राह्मण-s are in prose only. Apart from sacrificial procedures, they also contain mantras that are to be recited at various stages of the sacrifices.

Besides, the ब्राह्मण-s contain many आख्यान-s (narrative tales) and पुराण-s (legends) and नाराशंशि-s (songs in praise of great heroes). Even in the ब्राह्मण-s, the topics like शिक्षा (phonetics), व्याकरणम् (grammar), छन्दस् (metre), निरुक्तम् (etymology) and ज्योतिषम् (astronomy) are discussed. In the later period, these established as independent subjects of study.

(III) आरण्यकम् - Herein are discussed the inner meanings of the sacrifices and hence these books are also known as रहस्यब्राह्मणम् (Secret ब्राह्मण-s). Here begins, the speculative queries about the nature of the world, the nature of soul etc., which are discussed in depth in the उपनिषद्-s. The आरण्यक-s are the initial books of philosophy.

(IV) उपनिषद् - The word उपनिषद् is derived from the verbal root सद् - 'to sit' with the prefix उप and नि which means sitting close (to the spiritual teacher) or a close session. It denotes the beginning of the Vedic studies or the study of the Self. The word also means 'secret'. Since it reveals the secret or the true or hidden nature of the 'Inner Self', it is termed as आत्मविद्या (the knowledge of the Self) or पराविद्या (supreme knowledge).

The मुक्तिकोपनिषद् mentions 108 उपनिषद्-s as important among the many उपनिषद्-s. सर्वोपनिषदां मध्ये सारमष्टोत्तरं स्मृतम् । (मुक्तिकोपनिषद्- ४४)

The मुक्तिकोपनिषत् mentions 108 Upaniṣads as important among the many उपनिषत्-s. Among the उपनिषत्-s, ten are considered to be very important. They are -ईश केन, कठ, प्रश्न, मुण्डक, माण्डूक्य, तैत्तरीय, ऐतरेय, छान्दोग्य and बृहदारण्यक-उपनिषत्-s.”.

ईश-केन-कठ-प्रश्न-मुण्ड-माण्डूक्य-तित्तरिः ।

ऐतरेयञ्च छान्दोग्यं बृहदारण्यकं तदा ॥ (मुक्तिकोपनिषत्-३०)

These ten उपनिषत्-s belong to different शाखा-s of the four Vedas, as follows:

Name of the वेदः	Name of the उपनिषत्
ऋग्वेदः	ऐतरेयोपनिषत्
शुक्लयजुर्वेदः	ईशावास्योपनिषत् and बृहदारण्यकोपनिषत्
कृष्णयजुर्वेदः	तैत्तरीयोपनिषत् and कठोपनिषत्
सामवेदः	छान्दोग्योपनिषत् and केनोपनिषत्
अथर्ववेदः	मुण्डकोपनिषत्, माण्डूक्योपनिषत् and प्रश्नोपनिषत्

The उपनिषत्-s are the metaphysical treatises which contain the inquiry of the ancient seers about the vital problems of the earth, namely, the reason for the suffering and the ways for liberation from these sufferings. It also contains the spiritual experiences of the seers. They are rich in philosophical thought. Also it analyses the evolution of the creation, the eternity of the soul, the illusory nature of the world, the identity of the Individual Self with the Supreme Self etc. It explains the phenomena in a rational manner with examples or

illustrations. Further, it shows the way to experience the identity of the Self with ब्रह्मन् (the Brahman).

They are generally in the form of conversations like the one between नचिकेतस् and Lord यमः as we see in the कठोपनिषत् । We also find that the warrior caste was not lagging behind in the knowledge of the science of the sacrifices and ब्रह्मन् । The शतपथब्राह्मणम्, the बृहदारण्यकोपनिषत् and the छान्दोग्योपनिषत् refer to many such kings who exposed the ignorance of Brāhmins in the highest knowledge of ब्रह्मन् and who taught them the true knowledge. Thus we find the king जनकः of विदेहः discussing about ब्रह्मन्, the king प्रवहणः instructing the Brāhmin by name गौतमः, the king अजातशत्रुः teaching the proud बालाकिः, the king अश्वपतिः of कैकेयः instructing the five learned Brāhmins.

महावाक्यम् (Great sentences/ Phrases) :

These are explained as the महदर्थबोधकत्वात् महावाक्यम् (sentences that convey deep or great sense). The उपनिषत्-s, themselves are the essence of the speculative knowledge about ब्रह्मन् and the ways of obtaining the true knowledge. One prominent sentence or phrase which explains the principle of ब्रह्मन्, taken from one उपनिषत् of each Veda, is known as the महावाक्यम् । Thus we have four महावाक्य-s, one for each of the four Vedas. They are :

1. प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म from ऐतरेयोपनिषत् of the ऋग्वेदः ।
2. अहं ब्रह्मास्मि from बृहदारण्यकोपनिषत् of the शुक्लयजुर्वेदः ।
3. तत्त्वमसि from छान्दोग्योपनिषत् of the सामवेदः ।
4. अयमात्मा ब्रह्म from माण्डूक्योपनिषत् of the अथर्ववेदः ।

The elaboration of these महावाक्य-s will lead to the true Knowledge about ब्रह्मन् ।

The ऋग्वेदः Each of the Four Vedas are divided into many branches or recensions called शाखा । According to the महाभाष्यम्, the extensive commentary on अष्टाध्यायी of पाणिनिः, there existed 21 branches of the ऋग्वेदः ।

। But presently only one branch called शाकल शाखा is in vogue. There is mention of बाष्कल शाखा , आश्वलायन शाखा , शाङ्खायन शाखा and माण्डूकेयशाखा in other Vedic texts. The ऋग्वेदः priest called होता will recite the portions of the ऋग्वेदः when asked to do so.

The ऋग्वेदसंहिता is the oldest among the संहिता-s. The book is divided into ten chapters called मण्डलः । The ऋग्वेदसंहिता consists of 1,028 सूक्तानि (hymns) consisting of 10,750 ऋक्-s (verses or stanzas). It is observed that the hymns contained in the मण्डल-s 2 to 7 were handed down by the seers of one family each. The respective seers are गृत्समदः, विश्वामित्रः, वामदेवः, अत्रिः, भरद्वाजः and वसिष्ठः । The 8th मण्डलः consists of hymns handed down by two different families of priests - कण्वः and अङ्गिरस् । The 9th मण्डलः consists of hymns in praise of the deity Soma. It is also known as पवमानमण्डलः । The hymns of 1st and 10th मण्डल-s are of miscellaneous nature and belong to different seers. Among the ten मण्डल-s, 2nd to 7th are considered to be earlier in the period and the मण्डल-s 1 and 7 are the later additions. The hymns of ऋग्वेदसंहिता are in simple language without any artificiality, rich in imagination and lyrical in nature. It reflects the culture of the Aryans who had settled on the banks of the river called सिन्धुः । The hymns are addressed to various deities like इन्द्रः, अग्निः, मरुत्, पर्जन्यः, उषस्, पूषन्, भगः, अर्यमा, विष्णुः ।

कौषीतकी ब्राह्मणम् , also known as शाङ्खायन ब्राह्मणम् and ऐतरेय ब्राह्मणम् belong to the ऋग्वेदः । कौषीतकी-ब्राह्मणम् incorporates and कौषीतकी आरण्यकम् and कौषीतकी-उपनिषत् । The sage महिदास-ऐतरेयः is considered to be the author of ऐतरेय ब्राह्मणम् । ऐतरेयारण्यकम् is in 18 chapters. Both ऐतरेयारण्यकम् and ऐतरेयोपनिषत् are parts of ऐतरेय ब्राह्मणम् । The महावाक्यम् related to the ऋग्वेदः, - प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म is from the ऐतरेयोपनिषत् ।

The यजुर्वेदः - The यजुर्वेदः mainly contains detailed instructions in prose about the performance of various sacrifices with the hymns taken from the ऋग्वेदः, to be recited at the various stages of the sacrifices. The यजुर्वेदः has two distinct divisions known as शुक्लयजुर्वेदः and कृष्णयजुर्वेदः । In the कृष्णयजुर्वेदः, मन्त्रः-s and sacrificial instructions were intermingled. In the शुक्लयजुर्वेदः, the मन्त्रः-s are not mixed with sacrificial instructions and arranged separately. According to मुक्तिकोपनिषत्, there existed 15 branches of शुक्लयजुर्वेदः । But presently only two branches called काण्व शाखा & माध्यन्दिन शाखा are in vogue. In the कृष्णयजुर्वेदः, 94 branches were in vogue. But presently only two branches called तैत्तरीय शाखा & मैत्रायणी शाखा are in vogue. The यजुर्वेदः-priest called अध्वर्युः will recite the portions of the यजुर्वेदः when asked to do so.

The संहिता of both the divisions deal with many important sacrifices like दर्शपूर्णमासौ, सोम sacrifices, राजसूयः, वाजपेयः, अश्वमेधः, सर्वमेधः, the construction of the altar etc. Three संहिता-s of कृष्णयजुर्वेदः, namely, काठकसंहिता, मैत्रायणीसंहिता and तैत्तरीयसंहिता are well preserved. मैत्रायणीसंहिता was also known as कालापसंहिता । One more संहिता belonging to कृष्णयजुर्वेदः by name कपिष्ठसंहिता is available in fragments. तैत्तरीयसंहिता is divided into seven books called काण्डम् । तैत्तरीयब्राह्मणम् is attached to तैत्तरीयसंहिता and तैत्तरीयोपनिषत् is attached to तैत्तरीयारण्यकम् । As for काठक recension is concerned the काठकब्राह्मणम् is included in the तैत्तरीयब्राह्मणम् and कठोपनिषत् and श्वेताश्वतार-उपनिषत् belong to this recension.

The संहिता of शुक्लयजुर्वेदः is known as वाजसनेयीसंहिता । It is said to have been revealed by the Sun god in the form of horse to याज्ञवल्क्यः, who propitiated the Sun god by penance and got शुक्लयजुर्वेदः । We have two

संहिता-s related to the two recensions. They are almost identical in both content and arrangement. The ब्राह्मणम्-s related to both the recensions are named शतपथब्राह्मणम् । From the historical point of view this ब्राह्मणम् is most important, next to ऋग्वेदसंहिता । The most interesting legend of the deluge and मनुः saving the species with the help of the giant fish is found here. The story of पुरूरवस् and ऊर्वशी is also described here. This ब्राह्मणम् is established. From this, we learn that the kings were well versed in philosophy and even ब्राह्मण-s had learnt from the kings. Also that even women were well educated and they even questioned the sage mentions the kingdoms of the विदेहः and पाञ्चालः । It throws more light on the society of the age. The supremacy of the sage याज्ञवल्क्यः is established. From this, we learn that the kings were well versed in philosophy and even ब्राह्मण-s had learnt from the kings. Also that even women were well educated and they even questioned the sage याज्ञवल्क्यः in the assembly.

बृहदारण्यकोपनिषत् is the end portion of this ब्राह्मणम् । It is one of the longest and most important उपनिषत् । The महावाक्यम् related to the यजुर्वेदः - अहं ब्रह्मास्मि is from this उपनिषत् । ईशोपनिषत् also belongs to शुक्लयजुर्वेदः ।

The सामवेदः - The सामवेदः contains the hymns set in music in its संहिता portion. This Veda is closely related to the ऋग्वेदः, since the major portion of it consists of ऋक्-s (hymns) taken from the ऋग्वेदः, chiefly from the eight and tenth मण्डल-s. Out of 1549 hymns of the सामवेदः, only 75 are new. The rest are found in the ऋग्वेदः also. According to महाभाष्यम्, the extensive commentary on अष्टाध्यायी of पाणिनिः, there existed 1,000 branches of the सामवेदः । But presently three branches - जैमिनीय शाखा or तलवकारशाखा and

राणायनीय शाखा & कौथुम शाखा are in vogue. The hymns of the सामवेदसंहिता are distributed in two books called पूर्वार्चिकम् and उत्तरार्चिकम् । The hymns of the सामवेदः differ from that of the ऋग्वेदः only in the way of marking the accent. These are intended to be sung by the priest called उद्गाता when asked by अध्वर्युः or ब्रह्मा । These stanzas assume their proper character musical सामन्-s in the song books called गानम् । This Veda is the basis for the गान्धर्ववेदः (the Indian music).

उपनिषद्ब्राह्मणम् and केनोपनिषत् are parts of तलवकारब्राह्मणम् । Another notable ब्राह्मणम् related to the सामवेदः is ताण्ड्यब्राह्मणम्, also known as पञ्चविंशब्राह्मणम् or प्रौढब्राह्मणम् । Another important ब्राह्मणम् attached to the तलवकार school of the सामवेदः is छान्दोग्यब्राह्मणम् । The छान्दोग्योपनिषत्, which one of the 10 principal उपनिषत्-s is attached to this ब्राह्मणम् । The महावाक्यम् of this Veda - तत्त्वमसि is from this उपनिषत् ।

The अथर्ववेदः It is also known as अथर्वणवेदः । The sages अथर्वन् and अङ्गिरस् are considered to have revealed this Veda. Hence it is also known as अथर्वाङ्गिरावेदः । the अथर्ववेदः mainly contains the mantras for worldly achievements. It is also known as क्षात्रवेदः, since it mainly deals with the duties of the king and mantras for the victory of the king. The mantras related to peace, nourishment etc. have the sage अथर्वन् as the seer and the mantras that serve as spell have the sage अङ्गिरस् as the seer. It is more heterogeneous in character and somewhat different from the other three Vedas. Apart from the normal hymns which are to be recited at different stages of the sacrifices, it also contains many hymns and mantras which are in the nature of magic or spell. The priest related to this वेदः is ब्रह्मा । According to मुक्तिकोपनिषत्, there existed 50 branches of this Veda, but presently only two branches called शौनक शाखा & पिप्पलाद शाखा are in

important. The प्रश्नोपनिषद् belongs to the पिप्पलाद-recension. It is so called because it contains answers by the sage पिप्पलादः to the six vital questions related to Vedanta raised by six disciples of the sage. मुण्डकोपनिषद् derives its name from the word ' मुण्ड ', which refers to 'tonsured' and ultimately refers to an ascetic who has renounced the worldly attachments. It is a book meant for an ascetic. Among all the उपनिषद्-s this is the shortest. It is in prose form. It explains the sacred symbol ॐ as the symbolic expression of the universe and ब्रह्मन् । The महावाक्यम् of this Veda -अयमात्मा ब्रह्मा is from the this उपनिषद् ।

The Veda-related books : Besides the four kinds of the Vedic texts, the following texts are also closely related to the study of the Vedas. Even though these treatises were not composed by the Vedic seers, nevertheless, these were composed by eminent Vedic scholars who had a thorough knowledge about the Vedas and have classified the contents of the Vedas in a definite order. These books fall under three categories (1) the Indices known as अनुक्रमणिका,

(2) the Phonetic guides known as प्रातिशाख्यम्
and (3) the Commentaries known as भाष्यम् ।

The अनुक्रमणी are indexes. They list the hymns by its first letter and also mention the seer related to it and the metre of the hymn. The बृहद्देवता was written by the sage शौनकः and the सर्वानुक्रमणी was written by the sage कात्यायनः ।

Thus, the phonetic guide explains the rules, as are applicable to the particular branch of the Veda. The phonetic guide is also known by the name ऋक्-लक्षणम् (the treatise that deliberates on the characteristic features of the hymns). It gives more information about the letters, स्वरः (tone), syllable, colour, duration and the deity of the hymn. Each branch of the Vedas has a separate phonetic guide. All the branches of Vedas have its own प्रातिशाख्यम् which

explains the special rules of grammar, metre and pronunciation as are applicable to that particular branch of the Veda.

The भाष्यम् are extensive commentaries on the Vedic texts and explain various passages of the text, highlighting its importance, proper interpretation of the Vedic hymns are very much useful, for the proper understanding of the Vedas. Among the commentators, सायणाचार्यः is the foremost. He has rendered commentary on all the four वेदसंहिता and on many ब्राह्मण-s. All the three Acharyas, namely, श्रीशङ्कराचार्यः, श्रीरामानुजः and श्रीमध्वाचार्यः have rendered commentaries on the principal उपनिषत्-s.

(3) The Transition Period (1400 B.C. – 650 A.D.)

The Transition period comprises of Sūtra period (1400 B.C. - 800 B.C.) and the Epic & Purāna period (1400 B.C - 650A.D.). During the Transition period, the language has begun to change from the Vedic Sanskrit characterized by accents, to sūtra style. Accordingly majority of the literature was produced in the sūtra style. The sūtra literature include the treatises on six auxiliaries of the Veda, namely, शिक्षा, व्याकरणम्, छन्दस्, निरुक्तम्, कल्पः and ज्योतिषम् and philosophical treatises on the six theistic systems of philosophy (न्यायः, वैशेषिकम्, सांख्यः, योगः, मीमांसा and वेदान्तम्)..

Besides a separate class of literature, known as Epics and पुराण-s were also composed during this period. Thus transition period intermingles or overlaps with the Vedic period as well as with the Classical period.

The Epics and पुराण-s are distinct class of literature that were the fore-runners for the Classical literature. The Epics and पुराण-s maintain a distinct identity as for the form and contents, when compared with the Vedic and Classical literature. The Epics, glorify Lord श्रीरामः and श्रीकृष्णः and through history, they impart moral values for the society. The रामायणम् is a coherent account of the principal rulers of the solar race, particularly श्रीरामः । The महाभारतम् is of encyclopedic in nature and apart from history, it has assimilated into it Hindu mythology, many didactic discourses like भगवद्गीता, advice of भीष्माचार्यः to युधिष्ठिरः on राजधर्मः etc. and also previously existing anecdotes like नलोपाख्यानम्, सावित्र्योपाख्यानम् etc.

The पुराण-s, on the other hand, are sectarian in character and glorify a particular god and incorporate the vows and rituals practised during that period and also local histories and geographies of various

regions of the Bharat. Hence they are quite distinct from the court poems like महाकाव्यम्, खण्डकाव्यम् etc. The number of पुराण-s had swelled to 18 first, later further increased by another 18.

the Transition period comprising of Sūtra period (1400 B.C. - 800 B.C.) and the Epic & Purāna period (1400 B.C - 650A.D.)

(3.a) The Sūtra period

(1400 B.C. - 800 B.C.)

In the last stage of the Vedic period and during the transition period, there emerged a distinct class of literature closely related to the Vedas. The elaborate performance of various sacrifices throughout the year, needed some kind of codification in short form. Also due to the interval of many centuries from the period of composition of the Vedas and also due to skepticism among the people, there started many doubts regarding pronunciation and meaning for many Vedic words that had become obsolete by then. With the advent of Lord Buddha, people had some doubts about the utility of sacrifices and doctrines contained in the उपनिषद्-s.

Thus arose, the six वेदाङ्ग-s. The श्रौत-sūtra-s, actually, are the continuation of the ब्राह्मण-s and elaborate many of the rituals and the rules relating them. These were composed by eminent sages, who, out of compassion for the people and considering the decline of the intellect of the people, had codified and grouped the information that remain scattered at various places in the different branches of the Vedas.

Besides treatises in sūtra style were composed based on philosophical speculations contained in the Vedas, particularly in the उपनिषद्-s, for upholding the validity of the Vedas and to counter arguments against the Hindu tenets. Thus arose six theistic systems of philosophy and treatises were composed on and systems of philosophy.

गौतमः had written न्यायदर्शनम् on न्यायः system of philosophy, कणादः had written वैशेषिकसूत्रम् on वैशेषिकः system of philosophy, कपिलः had composed सांख्यप्रवचनसूत्रम् on सांख्यः system of philosophy, पतञ्जलिः had composed योगसूत्रम् on योगः system of philosophy, जैमिनिः had composed पूर्वमीमांसासूत्रम् on मीमांसा system of philosophy and बादरायणः had composed ब्रह्मसूत्रम् on Vedānta system of philosophy. All these treatises are in sūtra style. These philosophical sūtra literature are dealt with separately in "History of Darśana literature".

वेदाङ्गाः (The Vedāṅgās)

The सूत्र literature is designated as वेदाङ्ग-s (the six auxiliary texts). Later, the study of all the वेदाङ्ग-s was considered as a must for the proper pronunciation and understanding the Vedas and for the satisfactory performance of Vedic sacrifices at the right time. These may be termed as supplement to the Vedic texts. These are six in number. They are (1) शिक्षा (phonetics), (2) व्याकरणम् (grammar), (3) छन्दस् (metre), (4) निरुक्तम् (etymology), (5) कल्पः (the sacrificial procedure) and (6) ज्योतिषम् (astronomy). शिक्षा कल्पो व्याकरणं निरुक्तं छन्दसां चयः ।

ज्योतिषामयनं चैव वेदाङ्गानि षडेव ते ॥

The importance of the वेदाङ्ग-s is highlighted by the great grammarian पाणिनिः as follows :

छन्दः पादौ वेदस्य हस्तौ कल्पोऽथपठ्यते ।

ज्योतिषामयनं चक्षुर्निरुक्तं श्रोत्रमुच्यते ॥

शिक्षा घ्राणं तु वेदस्य मुखं व्याकरणं स्मृतम् ।

तस्मात् साङ्गमधीत्यैव ब्रह्मलोके महीयते ॥ (पाणिनीय-शिक्षा)

[If the Vedas are personified as a human being then the छन्दस् are his feet, the कल्पः is his hands, ज्योतिषम् are the eyes, the निरुक्तम् is be considered as his ears, the शिक्षा is be considered as his nose and the व्याकरणम् is be considered as his mouth. Hence one will be celebrated in the ब्रह्मलोकम्, only after mastering these texts].

That the वेदाङ्ग-s have established as books of authority in the Vedic period itself is evident by their specific mention in the तैत्तरीयोपनिषत् and मुण्डकोपनिषत् ।

1. शिक्षा (Phonetics) - The science of phonetics is compared as the nose of the वेदपुरुषः । (the Vedas personified). Thus the importance of this science is highlighted as the breath of human being. The wrong pronunciation will not only give rise to wrong meaning but also will lead to evil result. पाणिनीय-शिक्षा cites the anecdote of वृत्रः who wrongly pronounced with improper accent, the word 'इन्द्रशत्रुः' and hence was killed by Indra himself.

The तैत्तरीयोपनिषत् mentions that शिक्षा, as a subject that deals with letters, accent, quantity and pronunciation. There are a large number of books bearing the title शिक्षा which are short manuals containing directions for Vedic recitation and thus ensuring correct pronunciation. But the phonetic guides known as प्रातिशाख्यम् attached to each Veda are the first literature in this class. They deal with the pronunciation rules for the संहितापाठः and पदपाठः as are applicable to that particular Veda. Thus there are separate pronunciation guides for the different branches or recensions of the four Vedas. The ऋग्वेदप्रातिशाख्यम् was written by the sage शौनकः on the शाकलशाखा । The वाजसनेयी प्रातिशाख्यम् was by the sage कात्यायनः on the माध्यन्दिनशाखा of शुक्लयजुर्वेदः । We also have प्रातिशाख्यम् on the तैत्तरीय शाखा of कृष्णयजुर्वेदः । अथर्ववेदप्रातिशाख्यम् was written on the शौनकशाखा of the

अथर्ववेदः । प्रातिशाख्यम् exists on the सामवेदः also. (the Vedas personified). Here also the class of literature called याज्ञवल्क्य शिक्षा, वासिष्ठी शिक्षा, कात्यायनी शिक्षा, पराशरी शिक्षा, नारदीय शिक्षा, शौनकीयशिक्षा, गौतमी शिक्षा and पाणिनीय शिक्षा are some of the prominent शिक्षा-s. Among them नारदीयशिक्षा and पाणिनीय शिक्षा are popular.

2. व्याकरणम् (Grammar) - For the proper understanding of the Vedas, the knowledge of the grammar is very much essential. The व्याकरणशास्त्रम् is considered to be the mouth of the वेदपुरुषः (the Vedas personified). Here also the class of literature called प्रातिशाख्यम् are the first literature that deal with the grammatical peculiarities related to the particular recension of the Veda to which it belongs. The sage यास्काचार्यः refers to a Northern school and Eastern school of grammar and mentions many grammarians like शाकटायनः, शाकपूणिः, शाकल्यः, गार्ग्यः etc. by name. It was शाकटायनः who first propounded that nouns were derived from verbs (नामानि आख्यातजातानि). The grammar of पाणिनिः is based this theory only.

According to tradition quoted in लघुत्रिमुनिकल्पतरुः, there existed nine different schools grammar the earlier period. They are :

ऐन्द्रं चान्द्रं काशकृत्स्नं कौमारं शाकटायनम् ।

सारस्वतं चापिशलं शाकलं पाणिनीयकम् ॥

The रामायणम् informs that श्रीहनुमान् was proficient in all the nine grammars. (नवव्याकरणपण्डितः).

अष्टाध्यायी - The great grammarian पाणिनिः also refers to many grammarians by name. But their works have not come down to us. The earliest available text on the grammar was by पाणिनिः (600 B.C.) and the name of his grammar treatise is शब्दानुशासनम्, popularly known as अष्टाध्यायी, since the contents are spread in eight chapters called अध्यायः । The work was composed in the सूत्र-style and contains about 4,000 aphorisms. The अष्टाध्यायी is said to have been based on the fourteen group

of letters, known as 'प्रत्याहारः', said to have emanated from the डमरुः instrument in the hands of Lord शिवः when the latter had performed the dance.

The book mainly deals with the grammar rules for the classical Sanskrit which he called as भाषा । He also deals with the Vedic grammar to some extent. The book has four appendices called धातुपाठः, गणपाठः, उणादिसूत्रम् and लिङ्गानुशासनम् । Some consider the उणादिसूत्रम् as having been composed by शाकटायनः ।

कात्यायनः, also known as वररुचिः, of 400 B.C. had written explanatory notes called वार्तिकम् ।

महाभाष्यम् of पतञ्जलिः (300 B.C.) - He has rendered an extended commentary on the अष्टाध्यायी of पाणिनिः । It is renowned as महाभाष्यम् । His commentary is divided into eight अध्यायाः and each अध्यायः is further divided into 4 पादाः । Each पादः is again divided into several आह्निकः । Thus we have 85 chapters. The contents of महाभाष्यम् are the scholarly discussions on the sūtras of पाणिनिः and on the वार्तिकम् of कात्यायनः । Of the 4,000 sūtras of the अष्टाध्यायी, पतञ्जलिः considers about 1700 sūtras. He stresses that the study of the grammar is very much required for the protection of the Vedas.

He also defines an early notion of स्फोटः, which was elaborated by later Sanskrit linguists like भर्तृहरिः । According to him, a स्फोटः is the invariant quality of speech. The noisy element (ध्वनिः - audible part) can be long or short, but the स्फोटः remains unaffected by individual speaker differences. This concept has been linked to the modern notion of phoneme, the minimum distinction that defines semantically distinct sounds. Thus a phoneme is an abstraction for a range of sounds.

Many commentaries were written on महाभाष्यम्, of which the commentary named महाभाष्यप्रदीपः of कैयटः (11th cen.A.D) is most celebrated one.

भर्तृहरिः - भर्तृहरिः (6th cen.A.D.) had composed the work known as वाक्यपदीयम् । The work is named as वाक्यपदीयम्, since it deals with both वाक्यम् (sentence) and पदः (word). The book is divided in three sections called काण्डम् । The book is also known as त्रिकाण्डी । The first काण्डम् is named as ब्रह्मकाण्डम् or आगमकाण्डम् or आगमसमुच्चयः । Herein is established the identity of शब्दः with ब्रह्मन् । The second काण्डम् is named as वाक्यकाण्डम् and it defines a sentence and discusses various theories about sentence. The third काण्डम् is named as पदकाण्डम् or प्रकीर्णकाण्डम् and is subdivided into 14 chapters named as समुद्देशः । The words and its types are discussed in this काण्डम् ।

He elaborated the स्फोटः concept found in the महाभाष्यम् and propounded स्फोटसिद्धान्तः । He elevated the grammar to spiritual level by declaring as शब्दब्रह्मम् । He successfully refuted the concepts of नैयायिकाः and मीमांसकाः and established अखण्डवाक्यार्थः concept. There are about four commentaries on वाक्यपदीयम् । The commentary स्वोपज्ञवृत्तिः on वाक्यकाण्डम् is attributed to भर्तृहरिः । प्रकीर्णप्रकाशः on पदकाण्डम् is a commentary by हेलराजः (10th cen. A.D.).

भर्तृहरिः had also composed a commentary on the महाभाष्यम् of पतञ्जलिः, by name महाभाष्यदीपिका ।

Of the later writers, वामनः and जयदेवः of the 8th cen. A.D. had composed काशिकावृत्तिः on the अष्टाध्यायी । हरदत्तः of 13th cen. A.D. had composed a commentary on काशिका by name पदमञ्जरी ।

सिद्धान्तकौमुदी - भट्टोजिदीक्षितः of 17th cen. A.D had composed five works on grammar of which the first three are very famous - (1) सिद्धान्तकौमुदी, (2) शब्दकौस्तुभः and (3) प्रौढमनोरमा ।

The book सिद्धान्तकौमुदी is divided into 8 sections and deals with 11 grammatical topics viz., संज्ञा, परिभाषा, सन्धिः, सुबन्तम्, अव्ययम्, स्त्रीप्रत्ययः, कारकः, समासः, तद्धितप्रत्ययः, तिङन्तः and कृदन्तः । This is followed by chapters on उणादिसूत्रम्, Vedic grammar etc.

Besides, he has also dealt with Vedic language and vedic accents, and a chapter on लिङ्गानुशासनम् ।

There are about 24 commentaries on this work of which प्रौढमनोरमा by himself, तत्त्वबोधिनी by ज्ञानेन्द्रसरस्वती and बालमनोरमा by वासुदेववाजपेयी are very popular.

नागेश भट्टः of the 18th cen. A.D., had composed about 16 works on grammar. Among his grammar works, the following three works had earned him fame - (1) परिभाषेन्दुशेखरः (2) शब्देन्दुशेखरः and (3) लघुमञ्जूषा ।

वरदराजः had composed the following works on grammar - मध्यमसिद्धान्तकौमुदी, लघुसिद्धान्तकौमुदी and सारससिद्धान्तकौमुदी ।

3. छन्दस् (Metre) - छन्दस् or prosody deals with the Vedic metres and the rules applicable to them. यास्काचार्यः traces the etymology of the word to the root छद् - to cover, since the metre covers the hymns." The word छन्दस् may also be derived from the root छद् (छन्द) - to please. Since anything composed in metres is pleasing to the ears, it is called छन्दस् । The छन्दस् is personified as the feet of the वेदपुरुषः । Since the Vedic hymns are composed in various metres, the knowledge of the metres is utmost essential for the correct pronunciation of the Vedic hymns. That the Vedic hymns were composed in various metres itself tells that this science had attained perfection even before that.

Since the Vedic hymns are set in metres, the knowledge of this science is very much required for the correct pronunciation. माण्डूक्योपनिषत् makes a specific reference to this science. Here also the class of literature called प्रातिशाख्यम् are the first literature that deal with the rules as are applicable to the particular rescension of each Veda. शाङ्खायन-श्रौतसूत्रम् contains several chapters on Prosody. छन्दः-सूत्रम् of पिङ्गलाचार्यः is the earliest available treatise in this science. This book is in सूत्र- style and has eight अध्यायः | From the first अध्यायः to the beginning of the fourth अध्यायः, Vedic metres are described. The remaining portion of the book deals with the metres of the Classical Sanskrit. हलायुधः has rendered a commentary by name मृतसंजीवनी on this work.

Vedic metres are based on the number of letters, whereas the Classical Sanskrit metres are based on the short or long aspect of the syllable. While in the Classical Sanskrit metres, there shall be four quarters, there is no such restriction in the case of Vedic metres. In the Vedic metres, sometimes there may be one or two or three syllable less or more than prescribed for the particular metre.

There are 26 metres employed in the Vedas. Of them, 'गायत्री', 'ऊष्णिक्', 'अनुष्टुप्', 'बृहती', 'पङ्क्तिः', 'त्रिष्टुप्', 'जगती', are frequently used metres. The Vedic metres are the sources for the metres of Classical Sanskrit. The 'अनुष्टुप्' metre employed in the रामायणम् is from the Vedic metre 'अनुष्टुप्' only. Even in classical Sanskrit, the metre plays an important role. It has direct relations to the sentiments depicted in the काव्य-s.

नाट्यशास्त्रम् of भरतः and अग्निपुराणम् also contains chapters dealing the metres employed. Among the later works, छन्दोमञ्जरी of गङ्गादासः (12th cen. A.D.), वृत्तरत्नाकरम् of केदारभट्टः (15th cen. A.D.) are worth mentioning.

4. निरुक्तम् (Etymology) - This represents the early attempts to interpret the Vedas. The science of etymology is personified as the ear of the वेदपुरुषः । Without ear, a person will not be able to hear what others say. In the same way, without the knowledge of the etymology, the sense could not be understood, even if the sentence is grammatically correct. सायणाचार्यः defines निरुक्तम् as "The (science) which analyses the root of the word impartially for the purpose of understanding its true meaning."

The निघण्टुः is the earliest attempt on lexicography. It is a list of words extracted from the संहिता portion of the ऋग्वेदः, which needs explanation for understanding its true meaning. It is probable, according to the scholars that there might have existed many निघण्टु-s. But only one निघण्टुः has come down to us. There is considerable difference of opinion among the scholars about the authorship of the निघण्टुः । While some consider the निघण्टुः also was been written by यास्काचार्यः, some others, based on a reference found in the मोक्षधर्मपर्व of the महाभारतम् , are of the opinion that the author of the निघण्टुः was प्रजापतिकाश्यपः । The available निघण्टुः consists of five अध्यायः in three काण्ड-s. The first काण्डम् consists of three अध्यायः and the other two काण्ड-s consists of one अध्यायः each. The first काण्डम् is known as नैघण्टुक काण्डम् । It consists of a list of synonymous words. The second काण्डम् is known as नैगम काण्डम् or ऐकपदिककाण्डम् and consists of obsolete words and homonyms. The third काण्डम् is known as दैवत-काण्डम् and consists of words of deities.

यास्काचार्यः himself refers to as many as twelve authors of various निरुक्त-s, like आग्रायणः, औपमन्यवः, औदुम्बरायणः, गार्ग्यः, गालवः, शाकपूणिः etc. दुर्गाचार्यः, the commentator of निरुक्तम् , refers to as many as fourteen authors of निघण्टु-s. यास्काचार्यः is referred by name in the शान्तिपर्वः of the महाभारतम् । The language style also indicates that he was anterior to that of

पाणिनिः | Scholars generally assign him to a period of 9th cen. B.C. It contains twelve अध्यायः |

Of the twelve chapters of निरुक्तम् , the first five chapters are the निघण्टुः | The next seven chapters are the निरुक्तम् | Besides, it has two appendices also.

5. कल्पः (the sacrificial procedure) - In the Vedic literature, the emphasis is on the performance of the sacrifices. The origin of कल्पः can be traced to the ब्राह्मण-s. The necessary rules for the performance of the sacrifices are presented at one place in brief in सूत्र-form. Since कल्पः deals with the performance of the sacrifices, this is identified with the hands of the वेदपुरुषः (the Vedas personified), since it is the hands which executes the commands.

कल्पसूत्र-s are of four kinds - (1) श्रौत सूत्रम् (2) गृह्य सूत्रम् (3) धर्मसूत्रम् and (4) शुल्ब सूत्रम् | Of them श्रौत सूत्रम्, गृह्य सूत्रम् and शुल्बसूत्रम् are based on श्रुतिः or the Vedas and hence are classified as श्रौत literature and धर्मसूत्रम् is classified as स्मृतिः literature. Each Veda has separate श्रौत सूत्रम्, गृह्य सूत्रम् and धर्म सूत्रम् |

The श्रौतसूत्रम् narrates the procedure of performing the various Vedic sacrifices like अग्निहोत्रम् , दर्शपूर्णमासौ, वाजपेयः, राजसूयः, अश्वमेधः and various Soma sacrifices. We have many श्रौतसूत्र-s for different Vedas. The श्रौतसूत्रम् is also known as कल्पसूत्रम् |

Thus we have आश्वलायन्-श्रौतसूत्रम् related to ऐतरेयब्राह्मणम् and शाङ्खायन श्रौतसूत्रम् related to शाङ्खायनब्राह्मणम् of the ऋग्वेदः | The कात्यायन-श्रौतसूत्रम् is related with शतपथब्राह्मणम् of the शुक्लयजुर्वेदः | There are about six श्रौतसूत्र-s written on the कृष्णयजुर्वेदः | The श्रौतसूत्र-s written by आपस्तम्बः , बोधायनः are related to तैत्तिरीयशाखा | Besides we have other श्रौतसूत्र-s written

by भरद्वाजः, वाधूलः, वराहः and सत्याषाढः and हिरण्यकेशिन् । The श्रौतसूत्र-s by मानवः and वैखानसः are on शुक्लयजुर्वेदः । There are four श्रौतसूत्र-s on the सामवेदः known as आर्षेय-श्रौतसूत्रम् (मशक-श्रौतसूत्रम्) and लाट्यायन-श्रौतसूत्रम् attached to पञ्चविंशतिब्राह्मणम् , जैमिनीय श्रौतसूत्रम् is attached to जैमिनीयशाखा and द्राह्यायनश्रौतसूत्रम् is attached to राणायनीयशाखा । The अथर्ववेदः has one श्रौतसूत्रम् by name वैतानश्रौतसूत्रम् connected to गोपथब्राह्मणम् ।

The गृह्यसूत्र-s describe the rules of conduct of the three वर्ण-s, the sixteen संस्काराः (sacraments), the duties of a householder, teacher and a student, marriage customs, the funeral rites and पञ्चमहायज्ञ-s and all the पाकयज्ञ-s. All the rituals performed with the household fire are described.

We have two गृह्यसूत्र-s on the ऋग्वेदः - शाङ्खायनगृह्यसूत्रम् by सुयज्ञः and the आश्वलायनगृह्यसूत्रम् by the sage आश्वलायनः । These two गृह्यसूत्र-s are part of their respective श्रौतसूत्र-s. The पारस्कर-गृह्यसूत्रम्, also known as वाजसनेयगृह्यसूत्रम् belongs to शुक्लयजुर्वेदः । There are about nine गृह्यसूत्र-s belonging to the कृष्णयजुर्वेदः । They are the मानव-गृह्यसूत्रम् , वराह- गृह्यसूत्रम् and काठकगृह्यसूत्रम् and the others written by बोधायनः, भरद्वाजः, आपस्तम्बः, हिरण्यकेशी, वैकानसः, अग्निवेशः । The बोधायन- गृह्यसूत्रम्, भरद्वाज-गृह्यसूत्रम् and the आपस्तम्बगृह्यसूत्रम् are part of their respective श्रौतसूत्र-s. Of them, the बोधायनगृह्यसूत्रम् and the आपस्तम्ब- गृह्यसूत्रम् are very much in vogue. The सामवेदः has three गृह्यसूत्र-s by name गोभिल-गृह्यसूत्रम्, खादिर-गृह्यसूत्रम् and जैमिनीय-गृह्यसूत्रम् । The अथर्ववेदः has one गृह्यसूत्रम् by name कौशिकगृह्यसूत्रम् ।

The subject matter of धर्मसूत्र-s is the moral and religious code of conduct for all the four castes, the four modes of life, the rules for performing various sacraments, the duties of a celibate student, the duties of a graduate, the duties of the king, rules relating to the division of property, the duties of women, the types of marriages and the various atonements or expiatory acts (कृच्छ्र-s) for different sins or crimes. The

actual performance of the sacraments are described in the गृह्यसूत्र-s. These धर्मसूत्र-s are the basis for the स्मृति:-literature. There are about six धर्मसूत्र-s in vogue. These were written by गौतमः , बोधायनः , आपस्तम्बः, हिरण्यकेशी , वसिष्ठः and वैखानसः ।

The word शुल्बः refers to the thread or the rope. The construction of altars of different shapes and different heights according to the measurements are explained in these treatises. This was the earliest treatise on Geometry. These treatises are closely related to the Brāhmaṇa-literature. For the purpose of various यज्ञ-s, different types of altars are required to be constructed. These treatises describe the various types of measurements, the basics of Geometry and the general rules for the construction of the altars for various यज्ञ-s, the size and thickness of the bricks used for the construction of the altar etc. This class of literature is to be termed as technical literature only, though they are closely related to the sacrifices. Herein we find accurate measurement of the value of π , the Pythagoras theorem etc.

Though theoretically every Veda shall have its own शुल्बसूत्रम् , since every शाखा of every Veda has its own ब्राह्मण-literature, all the शुल्बसूत्र-s available are on the ब्राह्मण-s of the यजुर्वेदः only. We have seven शुल्बसूत्र-s. Of these, the कात्यायनशुल्बसूत्रम् is on शुक्लयजुर्वेदः and the बोधायन-शुल्बसूत्रम्, आपस्तम्ब-शुल्बसूत्रम्, मानव-शुल्बसूत्रम्, मैत्रायणीय- शुल्बसूत्रम् , वराह-शुल्बसूत्रम् and वाधूल-शुल्बसूत्रम् are on the कृष्णयजुर्वेदः ।

6. ज्योतिषम् (Astronomy) - We get the earliest reference to Astronomy in the ऐतरेयब्राह्मणम् which declares that "The sun does not rise, and set, but through its revolutions around the earth, it causes the day and night". The छान्दोग्योपनिषत् refers to it as नक्षत्र-विद्या । The Vedas at various places mention the days, the new moon (अमावास्या), the full moon (पौर्णमी), the months, the seasons, the दक्षिणायनम्, the उत्तरायणम्, the नक्षत्र-s, the sidereal

year, the eclipses, the Yuga etc. At some place 27 नक्षत्र-s are mentioned and at some other places 28 नक्षत्र-s are mentioned.

वेदाङ्गज्योतिषम् - Though each Veda has its own ज्योतिषशास्त्रम्, we have the वेदाङ्गज्योतिषम् of the ऋग्वेदः, यजुर्वेदः and the अथर्ववेदः only are available. The ऋग्वेदः version contains 36 verses and the यजुर्वेदः version contains 44 verses, the अथर्ववेदः version contains 162 verses. लगधः is mentioned as the author of these early treatises on the Astronomy. The work is assigned a period well before 1400 B.C.

The वेदाङ्गज्योतिषम् is helpful in ascertaining the position of stars and the movements of the Sun and the Moon. We learn from the book that The count of नक्षत्र-s started from कृत्तिका onwards. Five years put together was known as a युगः ।

Later, the subject branched into three as सिद्धान्तः, होरा and संहिता । Hence it was also known as स्कन्धत्रयम् ।

सिद्धान्तस्कन्धः - The सिद्धान्तः deals with the calculation about the movements and positions of the planets and the stars, the normal movements and reverse movements of the planets and also about the eclipses.

(1) सूर्यसिद्धान्तः - This is one of the earliest doctrine (सिद्धान्तः) in the astronomy of the Hindus. Its original version is by an unknown author. It describes the astronomy related theories and principles of the ancient Hindus. The work has been repeatedly recast. This सिद्धान्तः is supposed to be the knowledge that the Sun god gave to an असुरः called मयः ।

The contents include the motions of the Planets, direction-place-time, the Moon and Eclipses, the Sun and Eclipses, the Projection of Eclipses, planetary conjunctions, of the Stars, risings and settings, certain malignant aspects of the Sun and Moon, cosmogony, geography, and Dimensions of the Creation, the gnomon, methods for accurately calculating the shadow cast by a gnomon etc.

आर्यभटीयम् : This treatise was composed by आर्यभटः (5th cen.A.D.). This treatise is in four पादः-s (parts) - गीतिकापादः, गणितपादः, कालक्रियापादः and गोलाध्यायः and contains a total of 121 verses. The गीतिकापादः explains the basic astronomical parameters. The गणितपादः, as the name suggests deals with mathematics. It explains geometrical figures, arithmetic and geometric progressions, simple interest, simultaneous, quadratic and linear indeterminate equations, square root, cube root etc. The कालक्रियापादः explains various units of time as also the method of determining the positions of the planets for any given day. The गोलाध्यायः explains some important geometric aspects of the celestial sphere. The solar and the lunar eclipses, shape of the earth, cause of day and night etc. are explained in this chapter.

(3) पञ्चसिद्धान्तिका (6th cen.A.D.)- वराहमिहिरः had composed पञ्चसिद्धान्तिका on सिद्धान्तः branch of Astronomy. This throws light on various theories of Astronomy prevalent in his time. The work is a treatise on mathematical astronomy. It summarises five earlier astronomical theories, namely, सूर्यसिद्धान्तः, रोमकसिद्धान्तः, पौलिशसिद्धान्तः, वसिष्ठसिद्धान्तः and पैतमहसिद्धान्तः । रोमकसिद्धान्तः (Doctrine of the Romans) and पौलिशसिद्धान्तः (Doctrine of Paul) are two doctrines of Western origin which influenced the thought of वराहमिहिरः ।

(5) ब्रह्मस्फुटसिद्धान्तः (7th cen.A.D.) - The two well known works of ब्रह्मगुप्तः are - ब्रह्मस्फुटसिद्धान्तः and खण्डनखाद्यकम् - a करण text. The ब्रह्मस्फुटसिद्धान्तः (Corrected Theory of ब्रह्मा) is his most famous work. This book explains the methods for calculating the position of heavenly bodies over time, their rising and setting, conjunctions, and the calculation of solar and lunar eclipses.

He reinforced the idea of another day beginning at midnight,

propounded by आर्यभटः । He also calculated the instantaneous motion of a planet, gave correct equations for parallax, and some information related to the computation of eclipses.

सिद्धान्तशिरोमणिः (12th cen.A.D.) The सिद्धान्तशिरोमणिः was composed by भास्कराचार्यः - II and is divided into four parts called लीलावती, बीजगणितम्, ग्रहगणितम् and गोलाध्यायः । While the book लीलावती deals with arithmetic and elementary algebra and geometry, बीजगणितम् is a treatise on advanced algebra. The ग्रहगणितम् covers topics such as - mean and true longitudes of the planets., Lunar eclipses, Solar eclipses, Latitudes of the planets, Sunrise equation. The गोलाध्यायः covers topics such as nature of the sphere, Cosmography and geography, Planetary mean motion, and Astronomical instruments.

होरास्कन्धः - This is also known as जातकस्कन्धम् । The होराशास्त्रम् deals with the casting of horoscope, prediction of the future events and the various defects (अरिष्ट-s) and merits (योग-s) in horoscopes. The होराशास्त्रम् is of five kinds. They are जातकम् (horoscope), ताजिकम् रमलम्, प्रश्नः and स्वप्नः (dream).

बृहज्जातकम् (6th cen.A.D.) - This was written by वराहमिहिरः of 6th cen.A.D. This book contains 407 verses in 28 अध्याय-s. This book entirely deals with the characteristics, qualities, natures, positions, significance and relations of planets, their aspects, sources of strength, etc., राशि-s, ग्रह-s, नक्षत्र-s, horoscopes and all aspects related to horoscope.

सारावलिः by कल्याणवर्मा (10th Cen. A.D.), जातकपारिजातम् by वैद्यानाथदीक्षितः (14th cen.A.D.), फलदीपिका of महिष्वरः (13th cen. A.D.), जातकालङ्कारः by गणेशदैवज्ञः (17th cen.A.D). are other notable books.

संहितास्कन्धः - The संहिता comprehensively deals with both the calculation aspect as well as the predictions. The first exclusive treatise on the संहिता-

branch is बृहत्संहिता of वराहमिहिरः । It is encyclopedic in nature in 106 chapters.. It covers wide ranging subjects like Astronomy, Eclipses, Astrology, Geography, Meteorology, Agriculture, rainfall, clouds, Botany, Zoology, Gemmology, Architecture, sculpture, portents, earthquakes, manufacture of perfume, matrimony, domestic relations, politics, economics, rituals. All the topics are discussed in relation to planetary positions and stellar movements. He even outlines physiognomy and palmistry in three chapters.

The Sūtra- related books :

Besides गृह्यसूत्र-s, we have exclusive books on a single subject like the श्राद्धकल्पः and पितृमेधसूत्रम्, which elaborate the various rules for the श्राद्धः ceremony and funeral rites respectively. We also have another set of books known as परिशिष्टः (addenda) which elaborate some topics which were dealt with briefly in the श्रौत and गृह्यसूत्र-s. The परिशिष्टः, appended to the गोभिलगृह्यसूत्रम् and the वैतानसूत्रम् and the प्रायश्चित्तसूत्र-s, which treats the expiatory rites, are worth mentioning and are of great importance. The subject was still more discussed of its practice by few more set of books known as प्रयोगः (applicatory books or practical manuals), पद्धतिः (the way of performing the rituals) and करिका (the presentation of rituals in simple verses).

(3.b) The Epic-Purāna period (1400 B.C. – 650 A.D.)

The kernel of the epics might have been composed during the fag end of Vedic period itself, since we get reference to some Vedic seers like विश्वामित्रः, वशिष्ठः, याज्ञवल्क्यः etc. in the epics. Further, the ब्राह्मण-literature and the sūtra literature make reference to some of the characters of the महाभारतम् and some kingdoms like कोसलः, विदेहः, मगधः and cities like मिथिला etc. Though scholars establish that the extant पुराण-literature are redacted editions and belong to a later period, they unanimously agree that there might have existed a single पुराणम्, commonly referred to as पुराणसंहिता, during the sūtra period. This view point is strengthened by the statement found in the विष्णुपुराणम् that the sage व्यासः had composed the पुराणसंहिता ।

While in the Vedic literature, the word पुराणम् occur in the general sense of 'old narrative', in the sūtra literature the पुराण-s are referred to as a class of literature and not in the general sense of 'old narrative'. They even contain extracts from some पुराण-s, which are not found in the any of the extant पुराण-s. Hence it is concluded that the class of literature - पुराणम्, at least in its original form, had come into existence in the sūtra period itself. The language of the पुराण-s are different from that of the Vedas, since the language of the पुराण-s are not marked with accents. It is also distinct form the sūtra style found in sūtra literature. Hence scholars normally classify पुराण-s with the Classical Sanskrit, ie. the Sanskrit as codified by पाणिनिः । But पुराण-s are different from the classical literature in form and content. While language is Classical Sanskrit, the contents are purely religious and related to mythology and history. All the पुराण-s

follow a uniform verse-pattern. Classical Sanskrit literature, on the other hand were composed in गद्यम्, पद्यम्, चम्पू and in रूपकम् form and they may also contain descriptions of seasons, emotions etc and imaginary stories.

However, when we view the contents of the epics and the पुराण-s, we find that they are theistic and religious in character and glorify any particular god. This is a distinct feature of the पुराण-s. Whereas the majority of the classical literature are secular in character and concentrate on form such as prose, poetry, drama etc. and describe the nature and human emotions and glorify humans - whether historical hero or imaginary character.

Hence the epics and the corpus of पुराण-s which, though are composed in Classical Sanskrit, are distinct from the Vedas, the sūtra-literature and the Classical Sanskrit both in respect of form and theme, are grouped under epic period which is the intermingling period between the Vedic, sūtra and classical periods.

इतिहासौ (The Epics)

(800 B.C. to 200 B.C.)

The origin of Sanskrit epics can be traced to the संवादसूक्त-s (dialogue hymns) like that of पुरुरवस् and ऊर्वशी and the आख्यान-s (legends or narratives) like that of शुनःशेपः etc. We also get reference to many anecdotes and narratives in the ब्राह्मण-literature and the उपनिषद्-s. These are the fore-runners of the later epics and the पुराण-s.

In the इतिहासः-s, importance is given to the matter than to the form and are religious in character. Whereas in काव्यम्, the form is given more importance than to its contents. More attention was paid to the plot, the delineation of the characters and sentiments, in the mode of expression, the use of appropriate style, figures of speech etc.

While the महाभारतम् is the fore-runner and chief representative of the इतिहास-पुराण class, the रामायणम् is the oldest representation of the काव्यम् , though it is classed as इतिहासः । Both the epics are mainly composed in verse form. The रामायणम् is composed in अनुष्टुप् metre. The महाभारतम् is composed in अनुष्टुप् , उपजाति and वंशस्थः metres. It also preserves some old prose stories. There is no prose passage in the रामायणम् । Also, in the महाभारतम् , we come across many उवाच statements ('He told') which imply that some of the old narratives as they existed then were narrated verbatim. The रामायणम् is coherent in form and deals with the single story of the lineage of the kings of solar race with few sub narrations. The महाभारतम् , on the other hand, narrates many stories, anecdotes and narratives with the kernel story of the feud between the पाण्डव-s and पाण्डव and the कौरव-s.

The रामायणम्

This great epic was composed by the sage वाल्मीकिः । This work consists of 24,000 verses in seven books. They are - बालकाण्डम्, अयोध्याकाण्डम्, आरण्यकाण्डम्, किष्किन्धाकाण्डम्, सुन्दरकाण्डम्, युद्धकाण्डम् and उत्तरकाण्डम् । The book is termed as आदिकाव्यम् and the poet is known as आदिकविः । It is said that the sage had composed the work in 24,000 verses using the 24 letters of the famous गायत्रीमन्त्रम्, as the first syllable of the 24 verses at intervals of 1,000 verses each.

Origin of the रामायणम् - Historians trace the origin of the रामायणम् to the ancient songs of the bards or story tellers of अयोध्या singing the glory of the national hero श्रीरामः and his ancestors. These songs were well knitted by the sage वाल्मीकिः in a coherent poem in uniform metre, strictly

conforming to the rules of poetics and prosody. The poet, as told in the epic itself, had first taught this work to लवः and कुशः, the two sons of श्रीरामः, who had first recited the work in the very presence of the king.

Period of the epic :

Prior to the महाभारतम् - The महाभारतम् reproduces the whole of the रामायणम् as रामोपाख्यानम् as told by the sage मार्कण्डेयः to the पाण्डव-s. Some of the episodes like the stories of कल्माषपादः, वशिष्ठः etc. are found in the महाभारतम् also. Also some of the रामायण-characters like, परशुरामः, श्रीहनुमान् etc. appear in the महाभारतम् also. Some verses of the रामायणम् appear verbatim in the महाभारतम् । These indicate that the incidents described in the रामायणम् had occurred earlier to the incidents recorded in the महाभारतम् ।

The महाभारतम् was written by Lord गणेशः as the sage व्यासः dictated it, while the story of the रामायणम् was imparted to लवः and कुशः who propagated it in the world. This indicates that while रामायणम् might have been composed even before the invention of writing, thus establishing its anteriority over the महाभारतम् ।

The रामायणम्, does not mention many kingdoms of the south. But the महाभारतम् mentions many kingdoms of South India. अर्जुनः is said to have won the पाण्ड्य-kingdom. The south Indian kings also had participated in the महाभारत war.

The above facts demonstrate that the रामायणम् is earlier to the महाभारतम् ।

While some scholars, on the strength the Jataka stories of Buddhism (4th cen.A.D.), believe that the story of the रामायणम् is earlier to the Buddhism, Weber thinks that the रामायणम् was based on the दशरथजातक- tales of the Pali literature. Jacobi opines that the foundation of the रामायणम्

would be celestial myth of the Veda transformed into narrative of earthly adventures. In the ऋग्वेदः, सीता appears as Furrow personified and invoked as goddess.

History shows that पाटलीपुत्रम् was founded around 350 B.C. and was the capital of India at the time of Megasthenes. In canto 35 of the बालकाण्डम् of the रामायणम्, we see that श्रीरामः passes through the very spot, but there was no mention about the place, though smaller the cities of कौसाम्बी, कन्याकुब्जः and काम्पिल्यः are mentioned. So, it must have been written before पाटलीपुत्रम् was founded.

The capital of कोसलदेशः is mentioned as अयोध्या in the रामायणम्, whereas in the Pali and Jain literature, and by पतञ्जलिः and the Greek, it is referred as साकेतः । Later literature adopt both the names. But the word साकेतः is not mentioned in the रामायणम् at all. The last book refers श्रावस्तिः as the capital of कुशः । Also we learn from the Buddhistic literature that the king प्रसेनजित् ruled the कोसलः kingdom from श्रावस्तिः । Hence it is concluded that the capital was shifted from अयोध्या to श्रावस्तिः and अयोध्या was renamed as साकेतः before the death of lord Buddha and that the epic might have been composed well before this date.

While मिथिला and विशाला are spoken as twin cities in the रामायणम् we find that the cities had united under the name वैशाली during Buddha's period.

Some scholars like Weber hold that the रामायणम् bears clear signs of Greek influence and cite the story of Helen of Troy. He also opines that the रामायणम् is based on Jataka tales of Buddhism. These arguments are rejected because of an anterior date based on other inferences.

Hence, it is concluded that the most portion of the epic was completed well before 500 B.C. and all additions were made well before 200 B.C.

According to Prof. Jacobi, the रामायणम् is no allegory but that a Vedic myth elaborated. सीता, as the furrow of the ploughshare, personified as a goddess, occurs in the ऋग्वेदः । सीता in the रामायणम् is also stated as having come out from earth and again entering the earth at the end. The fight of श्रीरामः with रावणः is an amplification of the fight of Lord इन्द्रः with the demon वृत्रः । The alliance of श्रीरामः with हनुमान्, son of wind god, again, reminds one of the friendship of Lord इन्द्रः with the Wind god for conquering वृत्रासुरः ।

Development of the रामायणम् -Western scholars point out two stages in the development of the रामायणम् । According to Prof. Jacobi, the रामायणम् originally consisted of five काण्ड-s only i.e. from अयोद्याकाण्डम् to युद्धकाण्डम् । His conclusion is based on the following arguments :

(1) The logical conclusion of the plot is found in the coronation of श्रीरामः, described at the end of युद्धकाण्डम् । The story is complete with the coronation of श्रीरामः and even now the recitation and discourse on this epic concludes with the narration of the coronation of श्रीरामः ।

(2) In बालकाण्डम् and उत्तरकाण्डम्, श्रीरामः is spoken as an incarnation of Lord विष्णुः, while in other five काण्ड-s, he has been represented as a mortal hero. This statement is refuted by pointing to the incidents such as जटायुमोक्षम्, विभीषणशरणागतिः, नागास्त्रबन्धनमोक्षः etc., where वाल्मीकिः has expressively and suggestively referred to the divinity of श्रीरामः ।

(3) In the existing first and seventh book there are many stories which have no direct bearing on the main plot, while in books 2 to 6 the story is coherent and in काव्य-style.

(4) In the first chapter of the बालकाण्डम्, where the divine sage नारदः narrates the incidents of the epic, there is no mention to the incidents

described in the 1st and 7th book. In the third chapter of the बालकाण्डम्, we find another list of incidents which includes the incidents described in the 1st and the 7th book. This, he thinks, as a later addition.

(5) Indian काव्य-s, generally end on a happy note only. The coronation of श्रीरामः described at the end of युद्धकाण्डम्, therefore, is the logical end of the epic and the events described in उत्तरकाण्डम् relates to the separation and disappearance of सीता from श्रीरामः, which are regarded as the most sad events and inauspicious.

(6) In the बालकाण्डम् and उत्तरकाण्डम्, there are certain statements which are contrary to the some of the statements in the other काण्ड-s. For example, in बालकाण्डम्, we are told that लक्ष्मणः was married to ऊर्मिला । Whereas in आरण्यकाण्डम्, श्रीरामः asks शूर्पणखा to approach लक्ष्मणः, since he was not married.

A.A. Macdonell agrees with Jacobi and explains the abrupt beginning of आरण्यकाण्डम् by suggesting that there were originally a few chapters at the beginning of the अयोध्याकाण्डम्, which were later added with the newly added बालकाण्डम् । According to him the 5th chapter of the बालकाण्डम् is the original beginning of the रामायणम् ।

Despite all reasoning by the western scholars, it is admitted that the बालकाण्डम् and उत्तरकाण्डम् have formed part of the epic well before 300 B.C. since, the ancient poets भासः, कालिदासः, भवभूतिः, the Buddhist logician दिङ्नागः, the great Indian critic आनन्दवर्धनाचार्यः all accept बालकाण्डम् and उत्तरकाण्डम् as an integral part of the रामायणम् ।

Contents of the epic : According to the scholars, the contents of the epic may be grouped under two distinct parts. The story of the अयोध्याकाण्डम् refers to some historical events of the row over succession to the throne in the royal family of दशरथः at अयोध्या । This is quite natural and are the plots of an irate woman who wanted to set her son upon the throne are quite acceptable.

In the second part beginning from the ओध्याकाण्डम्, there are many unnatural and marvelous incidents described. According to Weber, the conquest of श्रीरामः over रावणः signifies the early attempts of the Āryans to conquer the South and extend upto लङ्का । But the view is without any basis. In the रामायणम् we don't find a single instance where श्रीरामः had annexed any kingdom with his own. Whether it is किष्किन्धा or लङ्का, he had coronated the native men on the throne and had a single purpose of locating and rescuing his wife सीता । The किष्किन्धा kingdom was entrusted to सुग्रीवः, the legal claimant to the kingdom and the kingdom of लङ्का was handed over to विभीषणः, the brother of रावणः । Nowhere, श्रीरामः is accused as the aggressor of the South. Hence there is no reason to reject the second part as myth. The story of the रामायणम् up to श्रीरामः returning to अयोध्या after the killing of रावणः is to be taken as narration of true history which is being validated by later research and excavations and evidences like stone inscriptions etc.

Other variants of the रामायणम् - Though वाल्मीकिरामायणम् is popular, still we have other versions of the रामायणम् । They are अध्यात्मरामायणम्, आनन्दरामायणम्, अद्भुतरामायणम् and योगवाशिष्ठम् ।

अध्यात्मरामायणम् - The अध्यात्मरामायणम् consists of about 4500 verses in 65 chapters. It is part of ब्रह्माण्डपुराणम् । The text consists of about 65 chapters in 7 काण्ड-s and 4,500 verses. The seven काण्ड-s are - बालकाण्डम्, अयोध्याकाण्डम्, आरण्यकाण्डम्, किष्किन्धाकाण्डम्, सुन्दरकाण्डम्, लङ्काकाण्डम् and उत्तरकाण्डम् । It is in the form of a dialogue between Lord शिवः and goddess पार्वती ।

This text represents the story of श्रीरामः in a spiritual context. The text philosophically attempts to reconcile भक्तिः in god Rama with Advaita Vedanta. The text represents श्रीरामः as the ब्रह्मन् (ultimate reality),

transferring all saguna attributes of श्रीरामः to the nirguna nature. अध्यात्मरामायणम् interprets every mundane activity of श्रीरामः to a spiritual or transcendent level.

आनन्दरामायणम् - This text traditionally ascribed to the sage वाल्मीकिः । The work comprises 12,323 verses spread over 109 सर्ग-s contained in 9 काण्ड-s. It is in the form of a dialogue between Lord शिवः and goddess पार्वती । The 9 काण्ड-s are - सारकाण्डम्, यात्राकाण्डम्, यागकाण्डम्, विलासकाण्डम्, जन्मकाण्डम्, विवाहकाण्डम्, राज्यकाण्डम्, मनोहरकाण्डम् and राज्यकाण्डम् । पूर्णकाण्डम्

सारकाण्डम् - It summarizes the entire story of वाल्मीकिरामायणम्, including the story of रावणः as given in the उत्तरकाण्डम् । The story of रावणः bringing the आत्मलिङ्गम् of Lord शिवः from कैलासः and the लिङ्गम् being fixed at गोकर्णक्षेत्रम् due to the machinations of Lord विष्णुः in the guise of a Brāhmin boy is described in detail. It describes the story of establishment of the लिङ्गम् at रामेश्वरम् । Besides, it describes the humbling of the pride of हनुमान्, the slaying of ऐरावणः and मैरावणः (friends of रावणः from the nether world), the story of कन्याकुमारी and the teaching of चतुःश्लोकीभागवतम् to व्यासमुनिः by the celestial sage नारदः ।

यात्राकाण्डम् - It describes the worship of the river गङ्गा by सीता, the story of the river सरयू and about the pilgrimage of श्रीरामः ।

यागकाण्डम् - It describes the अश्वमेधयागः performed by श्रीरामः along with सीता ।

विलासकाण्डम् - It describes the conjugal life of श्रीरामः and सीता ।

जन्मकाण्डम् - It describes the story of the banishment of सीता and the birth of लवः and कुशः to सीता । कुशः was the son born in the natural way to सीता whereas another baby was created by वाल्मीकिः out of लवः-seeds (hence named लवः) and infused with life and accepted by सीता as her own son. The famous रामरक्षास्तोत्रम् in this काण्डम् ।

विवाहकाण्डम् - It deals with the marriages of the predecessors of श्रीरामः । कुशः married with चम्पका and लवः with सुमतिः । यूपकेतुः (son of शत्रुघ्नः) married मदनसुन्दरी (daughter of the King कम्बुकण्ठः). It also contains the मूलमन्त्रः of श्रीआञ्जनेयः ।

राज्यकाण्डम् - It contains some miscellaneous topics like the banning of laughter in his kingdom by श्रीरामः, the story of previous births of the sage वाल्मीकिः and the discourses on धर्मः to his subjects.

मनोहरकाण्डम् - It contains the exposition of spiritual truths by श्रीरामः to his mothers कौसल्या, सुमित्रा and कैकेयी, at their request. It also incorporates a number of hymns, such as सीतारामकवचम्, हनूमत्कवचम्, सीताकवचम् etc.

पूर्णकाण्डम् - It describes the ascent of श्रीरामः to वैकुण्ठम् after installing कुशः on his throne as his successor.

अद्भुतरामायणम् - This work is also traditionally attributed to the sage वाल्मीकिः । It consists of 1,355 verses spread over 27 सर्ग-s. It is in the form of advice from the sage वाल्मीकिः to the sage भरद्वाजः about the import of the रामायणम् । वाल्मीकिः reveals that श्रीरामः is ब्रह्मन् and सीता, the highest प्रकृतिः, is the power of ब्रह्मन् । He then narrated the reasons for the descent of श्रीरामः and सीता, which were apparently due to the curses of the sages नारदः and पर्वतः । But these curses were really pronounced for the purpose of destroying the wicked and protect the good.

This is followed by the story of the birth of सीता as the daughter of रावणः, her abandonment by his wife मण्डोदरी, and found by जनकः, the king of मिथिला, in his field. The रामायण-story abruptly starts from the encounter between परशुरामः and श्रीरामः । श्रीरामः displays His universal form and withdraws the splendour of परशुरामः and advises to retire to the forest and do penance. The story of श्रीरामः crossing the ocean and killing the 10-headed रावणः and his return to अयोध्या are all described in just 20 verses.

On hearing from s सीता about 1000 headed महारावणः, the elder brother of रावणः, श्रीरामः, on hearing this, starts on an invasion of the पुष्करद्वीपः, the abode of the thousand-headed monster, in order to destroy him. In the terrific war that ensues, श्रीरामः falls down unconscious. Seeing this tragedy that had overtaken श्रीरामः and his forces, सीता assumes the terrible form of काली and destroys the demon along with all his forces. श्रीरामः wakes up and is surprised to see काली there and praises her with a long hymn containing 1,008 names, known as सीतासहस्रनामम् । सीता, thereafter, reappears in her original form. After gaining victory, श्रीरामः returns to अयोध्या and resumes his rule.

योग-वासिष्ठम् - This book is also attributed to वाल्मीकिः । Other names of this text are महारामायणम्, आर्षरामायणम्, वसिष्ठरामायणम् and ज्ञानवासिष्ठम् । The text is available in two versions - the long version, also known as बृहत्योगवासिष्ठम्, contains over 32,000 verses and the short version, also called लघुवासिष्ठम् contains 6,000 verses. It is the form of a discourse of sage वसिष्ठः to Prince श्रीरामः । The text into six sections - वैराग्यप्रकरणम्, मुमुक्षु-व्यवहारप्रकरणम्, उत्पत्तिप्रकरणम्, स्थितिप्रकरणम्, उपशमप्रकरणम् and निर्वाणप्रकरणम् ।

वैराग्यप्रकरणम् (Exposition of dispassion) reveals the frustration of श्रीरामः with the nature of life, human suffering and disdain for the world.

मुमुक्षु-व्यवहारप्रकरणम् (Exposition of the behavior of the seeker) describes, through the character of श्रीरामः, the desire for liberation, the nature of those who seek such liberation, and the need for self-effort in all spiritual pursuits.

उत्पत्तिप्रकरणम् (Exposition of the arising and birth) describes the birth of all creation, present cosmology and the birth of spiritual side of श्रीरामः ।

स्थितिप्रकरणम् (Exposition of the existence) describes the nature of world and many non-dualism ideas with numerous stories.

उपशमप्रकरणम् (Exposition of the arising and birth) discusses meditation and its powers in liberating the individual.

निर्वाणप्रकरणम् (Exposition of the liberation) describes the state of an enlightened and blissful श्रीरामः । The last book also has large sections on योगः ।

योगवासिष्ठम् teachings are presented as stories and fables, with a philosophical foundation similar to those found in Advaita-Vedanta. The text expounds the basic tenets of Advaita philosophy i.e. माया and ब्रह्मन् and the principles of monism.

Influence of the रामायणम् - The रामायणम् is the most popular epic of India. This great work has influenced the thought and culture of India and has moulded the character of Indians for generations up to the present day. Countless Hindus hold a study of this act as an act of piety. वाल्मीकिः himself says - यावत्स्थास्यन्ति गिरयः सरितश्च महीतले ।

तावद्रामायणकथा लोकेषु प्रचरिष्यति ॥

Its story has formed the subject matter of many works in Sanskrit and the regional languages of India. This great epic has been translated in almost all the Indian languages. Great poets like, Tulasidasa, Kambar, Pothanna, Ezhuttacchan had composed the epic-work in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam respectively. Many poets and dramatists like भासः, कालिदासः, भवभूतिः and others have composed works on the story of the रामायणम्. Thus we have the महाकाव्य-s - रघुवंशः, सेतुबन्धः, भट्टिकाव्यम्, जानकीहरणम् and dramas like प्रतिमानाटकम्, अभिषेकनाटकम्, महावीरचरितम्, उत्तररामायणम्, अनर्घराघवम्, बालरामायणम्, प्रसन्नराघवम्, रामायणमञ्जरी and the चम्पू named रामायणचम्पू composed by the later poets.

The महाभारतम्

Though the रामायणम् is termed as आदिकाव्यम्, the महाभारतम् is the oldest representative of the इतिहास-पुराण-class of literature. It is a repository of all ancient legends and bard songs. It contains more than one lakh verses, in its present form, in 18 books called पर्व , with a supplement. It is the largest and the oldest epic in the history of world literature. It is more closely related to the Vedas and धर्मशास्त्र-s. The work is named as महाभारतम् because of its greatness and volume. This reason is furnished in the book itself. (महत्वाद् भारवत्वाच्च महाभारतमुच्यते).

Authorship : This work was composed by the sage कृष्णद्वैपायनः, who is also known as व्यासः । The text provides information about the author. He was the son of the sage पराशरः through सत्यवती । He was the father of the sage शुकब्रह्मम् । He had arranged the one Veda into four and imparted it to his four disciples – पैलः, वैशम्पायनः, जैमिनिः and सुमन्तः who spread them in the world. He is also credited with the 18 पुराण-s and उपपुराण-s. The text informs that the sage had completed the work over a period of three years and he sought the help of Lord गणेशः to write the work as he dictated the verses.

But western scholars, based on the etymological sense of the word ' व्यासः (compiler or arranger) 'are of the opinion that the term refers to who compiled this compendium called the महाभारतम् ।

Propagation of the work : This work was taught by the sage व्यासः to his disciple वैशम्पायनः who narrated it to the king जनमेजयः and the audience at the सर्पयागः (snake sacrifice). Later, the story was told by उग्रश्रवः, the सूतः (bard) to शौनकः and other sages assembled at नैमिषारण्यम् during a twelve year sacrifice.

The three stages of development of the महाभारतम् -

According to Prof. Macdonell, the epic must have passed through three stages of development before it assumed its present form. His argument in favour of three stages are :

- (1) The work is referred to with three different names in the epic itself. It is known as जयः , भारतसंहिता and महाभारतम् ।
- (2) There are indications in the work itself about the three stages since three verses indicate a different no. as the total number of verses.

अष्टौ श्लोकसहस्राणि अष्टौ श्लोकशतानि च ।

अहं वेद्मि शुको वेत्ति सञ्जयो वत्ति वा न वा ॥ 1.81.

चतुर्विंशतिसाहस्रीं चक्रे भारतसंज्ञिताम् ।

उपाख्यानैर्विना तावद्भारतं प्रोच्यते बुधैः ॥ 1.102

इदं शतसहस्रं तु श्लोकानां पुण्यकर्मणाम् ।

उपाख्यानैः सह ज्ञेयं महाभारतमुत्तमम् ॥ 1.101

Based on these verses, the scholars are of the opinion that initially, in the first stage, the epic contained 8,800 verses only. In the second stage the work expanded to 24,000 verses and in its third and final stage, it was amplified to 1,00,000 verses.

- (3) Three beginnings of the epic is recognised by the epic itself.

मन्वादि भारतं केचिदास्तिकादि तथाऽपरे ।

तथोपरिचराद्यन्ये विप्राः सम्यगधीयते ॥ (M.B.I.1.52)

(Some people recite the work भारतम् from the beginning of the mantra (invocatory stanza), others from the story of आस्तिकपर्व (of आदिपर्व) and still others from the story of उपरिचरवसुः (of आदिपर्व).

Those who feel that this work is a homogeneous work refute the above claim and reply that :

- (1) The number of verses 8,800 mentioned in the work is with reference to the riddle verses. The work clearly states that the riddle verses are 8,800. Hence to assume that this work initially had 8,800 is not correct.

(2) It is not uncommon in any language for a work to have two names. पाणिनिः has named his work as शब्दानुशासनम्, but it is invariably referred to as अष्टाध्यायी by all successive writers. Thus the original work named as जयः was subsequently referred as भारतसंहिता without sub-narrations and as महाभारतम् with all sub-narrations. Even in English, some of Shakespeare's dramas have two names e.g. Twelfth Night or What you will.

(3) When the author himself confesses that he had composed the work in two versions - one is unabridged version in 1,00,000 verses, which includes all sub-narrations, and the other an abridged version in 24,000 verses without sub-narrations, why should one assume that the work was amplified by some body at a later stage ?

Hence this three-stage growth of the epic on the above grounds is not accepted some scholars like V.S.Agarwala, however, agree that in course of time, some narrations might have been added to the epic which are relevant to the context for the purpose of explaining the धर्मः or for strengthening arguments in favour of धर्मः ।

The first stage : The original and the most ancient part of the epic must have had a historical background. The family feud between the कौरव-s and the पाण्डव-s and the subsequent war in which the पाञ्चाल-s supported the पाण्डव-s, was the kernel story. In the Vedic literature, the tribal wars of कौरव-s and पाञ्चाल-s are spoken of frequently. Since यजुर्वेदः speaks of the unity between the कौरव-s and the पाञ्चाल-s, the conflict between the two tribes would have taken place much earlier, well before the final formation of the यजुर्वेदः । Also, the काठकम् , a branch of यजुर्वेदः, refers to the names धृतराष्ट्रः and विचित्रवीर्यः । Hence, A.A.Macdonell feels that the conflict between the two tribes would have happened well before 10th cen. B.C.

Various authors who lived during the period of the great conflict might have composed battle songs describing the conflict and glorifying the heroes. These songs, handed down by the bards to the

subsequent ages, were sung in the assemblies and during the sacrifices. At a later stage, some poet might have integrated these songs and composed a coherent poetry by the name जयः । The name itself suggests the victory of the पाण्डव-s. According to Prof. A.A.Macdonell and E.W.Hopkins, the story in its first stage glorified the कौरव-s who were defeated by the पाण्डव-s treacherously, since the killing of भीष्मः, द्रोणाचार्यः, भूरिश्रवः and दुर्योधनः was through unfair means. They feel that when a change in the ruling dynasty took place, the fair means of the पाण्डव-s was justified variously, since the story could not be altered at that stage.

This stage might have been completed well before 5th cen. B.C. The आश्वलायनगृह्यसूत्रम् (5th cen.B.C.) refers to a work called भारतम् । Also, in Pali literature of 5th cen.B.C., we find god ब्रह्मा occupying prominent position. In the Vedic literature the god ब्रह्मा is assigned a subordinate role only. In the महाभारतम्, we find that the god ब्रह्मा is represented as the supreme god. Therefore it can well be assumed that the first form of the epic poetry came into existence before 5th cen. B.C. The first stage contained 8,800 verses only.

The second stage : In the second stage, the work was enlarged by narrating the whole story of the पाण्डव-s in the epic style. Here the पाण्डव-s were represented in a favourable light and श्रीकृष्णः was proclaimed as an incarnation of Lord विष्णुः । This expansion of the work might have taken place around 400 B.C. and 1st cen.A.D. Megasthenes of Greek, who came to India around 300 B.C. informs that the two sects of Hinduism were Saivites and Vaishnavites. Since both Lord विष्णुः and Lord शिवः are portrayed as most prominent gods, this expansion was carried out around 400 B.C. Also the Greeks (यवनाः) and the Scythians (शकाः) are mentioned as allies of कौरव-s in the second stage. Also Hindu temples and Buddhist mounds are also referred in the महाभारतम् । Hence it is concluded that the second stage was attained between 400 B.C. and 1st cen.A.D.

The third stage : Western scholars are of the view that the priestly caste, seeing the popularity of the epic, added didactic matters and religious discourses and elevated the epic to the status of Veda (called as पञ्चमो वेदः or कार्ष्णवेदः) and as an authority on धर्मः । The work had attained its final stage with one lakh verses.

The book XII and XIII and हरिवंशः are of later date. This stage was attained well before 5th cen. A.D. We find reference to the महाभारतम् in various inscriptions and land grants. By 7th cen A.D. the book was regarded as a sacred book and was used to be read in temples also. बाणभट्टः, सुबन्धुः, कुमारिलभट्टः and श्रीशङ्कराचार्यः were conversant with the महाभारतम् ।

Contents of the epic :

The content of the epic is spread in 18 sections or books. The names of the 18 books are : (1) आदिपर्वः, (2) सभापर्वः, (3) वनपर्वः, (4) विराटपर्वः, (5) उद्योगपर्वः, (6) भीष्मपर्वः, (7) द्रोणपर्वः, (8) कर्णपर्वः, (9) शल्यपर्वः, (10) सौप्तिकपर्वः, (11) स्त्रीपर्वः, (12) शान्तिपर्वः, (13) अनुशासनपर्वः, (14) अश्वमेधपर्वः, (15) आश्रमवासिकपर्वः, (16) मौसलपर्वः, (17) महाप्रस्थानिकपर्वः and (18) स्वर्गारोहणपर्वः । The 19th book is the supplement called हरिवंशः (genealogy of हरिः (Lord विष्णुः)). All the 18 books are not of equal length. While आदिपर्वः, वनपर्वः, शान्तिपर्वः and अनुशासनपर्वः are too big, सभापर्वः, सौप्तिकपर्वः, स्त्रीपर्वः and मौसलपर्वः are very small. Each book is divided into chapters called पर्वः and each chapter is further subdivided into sub-chapters called अध्यायः ।

The contents or subject matter of the महाभारतम् can be analysed into three sections - (1) The kernel story of the epic describes in about 24,000 verses, the feud between the पाण्डव-s and the कौरव-s and the great war. (2) The secondary narratives containing ancient stories and legends, moral fables and the creation of the world, deluge. (3) Didactic and ethical sermons, the exposition of the four पुरुषार्थ-s (goals of life), the duties of four castes, the four modes of life etc. It includes philosophical treatises like

भगवद्गीता, विदुरनीतिः, यक्षप्रश्नः, अनुगीता and many stotras like शिवसहस्रनामस्तोत्रम्, विष्णुसहस्रनामस्तोत्रम्, दुर्गास्तुतिः, भीष्मरजस्तवः etc.. Because of the greatness of its contents it is termed as पञ्चमो वेदः (the fifth Veda), काष्णो वेदः (the Veda of कृष्णाद्वैपायनः) etc.

The encyclopedic nature of the book is recorded in the book itself, in the following verse: धर्मं चार्थं च कामं च मोक्षं च भरतर्षभ ।

यदिहास्ति तदन्यत्र यन्नेहास्ति न तत् क्वचित् ॥

(In the matter of धर्मः, अर्थः and कामः, what is found here (in this book) is found elsewhere and what is not found here could be found anywhere else).

Within this kernel story of the conflict between the पाण्डव-s and the कौरव-s, are inserted many ancient stories, legends and anecdotes. Sometimes a whole book is also inserted e.g. नलोपाख्यानम् । The famous stories of नल-दमयन्ती, सत्यवान्-सावित्री, शकुन्तला-दुष्यन्त etc. are found in this book. In course of time, discourses on philosophy on philosophy, religion, धर्मः, राजधर्मः, modes of life, duties of four castes, the greatness of charity etc. are added to the text and because of this book is regarded equal to स्मृति-literature and as धर्मशास्त्र also.

The supplement हरिवंशः narrates the incarnation of Lord विष्णुः as श्रीकृष्णः । It contains about 16,000 verses and is divided into three sections- (1) the ancestors of Lord कृष्णः and the birth of Lord कृष्णः, (2) The sports of child कृष्णः and his exploits and (3) the corruption of कलियुगः and the greatness of Lord कृष्णः ।

Influence of the महाभारतम् on later literature :

Several poets of the later date composed dramas, काव्य-s, चम्पू-s etc. based on various episodes/ incidents contained in this great epic. नलोपाख्यानम् was the source for the महाकाव्य-s like नैषधम् and for the works

नलोदयः, नलचम्पू । The अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तलम् drama of कालिदासः is based on शकुन्तलोपाख्यानम् । किरातार्जुनीयम् of भारविः, शिशुपालवधमहाकाव्यम् of माघकविः, वेणीसंहारम् drama of भट्टानारायणः are based on the anecdotes/ incidents described in the महाभारतम् । भासः has dramatized various incidents of the महाभारतम् in his dramas कर्णभारम्, ऊरुभङ्गः, दूतवाक्यम्, पाञ्चरात्रम्, मध्यमव्यायोगः, दूतघटोत्कचम् । दण्डिन्, सुबन्धुः and बाणभट्टः profusely allude many of the characters and incidents of the महाभारतम् ।

The ethical part of the महाभारतम् also have influenced the later philosophers. Among them the भगवद्गीता was commented upon by all the three आचार्य-s viz. श्रीशङ्कराचार्यः, श्रीरामानुजाचार्यः and श्रीमध्वाचार्यः । The विदुरनीतिः and यक्षप्रश्नः are oft quoted. The स्तोत्र-s like विष्णुसहस्रनामम्, शिवसहस्रनामम्, दुर्गास्तोत्रम्, भीष्मरजस्तवः etc. are recited by devout Hindus. Discourses on the philosophy of the भगवद्गीता, and also the discourse of the महाभारतम् especially the विराटपर्व are still made by exponents of the great epic.

Besides, this work was rendered in almost all Indian languages. This work has also influenced the fine arts like drawings, sculpture, music etc.

Thus this great epic had influenced the later poets in many ways.

हरिवंशः - Considering its length and subject matter, it can well be classified as a पुराणम् । But this work is treated as an appendix or supplement to the work महाभारतम् । It contains more than 16,000 verses. It glorifies Lord विष्णुः and his incarnation as Lord कृष्णः । This is also narrated by वैशम्पायनः to जनमेजयः at his specific request.

The book is divided into three parts - the first book हरिवंशः gives an account of the creation of the world, that of the kings of the Solar and Lunar dynasties and several legends like that of ध्रुवः, वेनः, पृथुः, विश्वामित्रः । It also gives an account of यदुः, ancestor of श्रीकृष्णः, and the birth of Lord कृष्णः । Besides, it also contains some hymns addressed to Lord विष्णुः ।

The second book called विष्णुपर्व elaborately describes the child-sports of Lord कृष्णः and his later adventures. Thus the entire कृष्णावतारः is portrayed in this book. The third book is called भविष्यपर्व | It contains some prophecies about the future. Also included therein are the incarnations of नरसिंहः and वामनः | Some more exploits of श्रीकृष्णः are narrated. Also, the fruit of reading the हरिवंशः and the महाभारतम् are detailed.

Thus the हरिवंशः is more religious in character and is of less literary value.

The भगवद्गीता - The भगवद्गीता is a philosophical poem in about 650 verses spread in 18 अध्याय-s. This poem is contained in the भीष्मपर्व of the महाभारतम् | This was the detailed advice by Lord कृष्णः to अर्जुनः who on seeing his relatives lined up in the opposition row at the battlefield, was confused and refused to fight with his own relatives. It was then that Lord कृष्णः enlightened him to perform his duty and in the course of his advice, details the principles of (कर्म, भक्तिः ज्ञानम् etc.) Many of the facets of the philosophy outlined in this book are quoted by all the three आचार्य-s. This book is translated in all the languages of the world and many commentaries are written by various scholars.

According to the Western scholars, the brief conversation between श्रीकृष्णः and अर्जुनः was later amplified to include philosophical aspects also.

The रामायणम् and the महाभारतम् - a contrast :

The essential difference between the रामायणम् and the महाभारतम् is given below :

Sl. No.	The रामायणम्	The महाभारतम्
1.	It is an epic and ornate poetry.	It is a mixture of epic and <u>didactic</u> poetry.
2.	The रामायणम् is a book of Idealism.	The महाभारतम् is book of realism.
3.	The entire रामायणम् is in verse form and in uniform metre (अनुष्टुप् metre) and the narrations are by one person only (as told by the poet).	The महाभारतम्, on the other hand, contains prose narrations at some places. Also the story is narrated by many narrators alternatively like, सौतिः, वैशम्पायनः and सञ्जयः ।
4.	The epic represents a refined and gentle poetry	We find the war like spirit and rough manners, deceits etc. in the epic.
5.	The events related to the main story belong to the त्रेतायुगः ।	In the case of the महाभारतम्, the events are related to the द्वापरयुगः ।
6.	The heroine सीता was a timid and modest lady.	The heroine द्रौपदी was fiery and bold.
7.	कौसल्या and कैकेयी do not exhibit a heroic spirit.	सत्यवती, कुन्ती and गान्धारी exhibit their zeal to protect धर्मः।

The पुराण-s (Hindu Mythology)

The term पुराणम् occurs in the ब्राह्मण-literature and in the उपनिषद्-s in the sense of cosmogonic inquiries and ancient tales. An early reference is found in the छान्दोग्य-उपनिषद् । The बृहदारण्यक-उपनिषद् refers to पुराणम् as the "fifth Veda". We learn from गौतमधर्मसूत्रम्, the oldest among the धर्मसूत्र-s, that पुराण-s are mentioned as a class of literature. आपस्तम्ब-धर्मसूत्रम् contains some quotations from पुराण-s, which are not found in any of the existing पुराण-s. Even the महाभारतम् refers to old पुराण works. These references show that there were पुराण works even before the महाभारतम् and the धर्मसूत्र-s. But the पुराण-s that we have now, are of later origin though many of them contain portions from the earlier पुराण-s that have become extinct.

The विष्णुपुराणम् contains a statement that the sage व्यासः wrote the work named 'पुराण-संहिता', which was later elaborated into 18 different पुराण-s by his disciples.

आख्यानैश्चाप्युपाख्यानैः गाथाभिः कल्पसिद्धिभिः ।

पुराणसंहितां चक्रे पुराणार्थविशारदः

प्रख्यातो व्यासशिष्योऽभूत् सूतो वै लोमहर्षणः ।

पुराणसंहितां तस्मै ददौ व्यासो महामुनिः [विष्णुपुराणम्- III. (25-26)]

Other पुराण-s also refer to the fact that there existed one पुराणम् only in the beginning. This explains the common authorship of all the 18 पुराण-s. The पुराण-s are eighteen in number and are didactic in character and sectarian in purpose. Though all these पुराण-s were narrated by सूतपौराणिकः to शौनकः and other sages in the नैमिष-forest, the sage व्यासः is ascribed the authorship of all the पुराण-s. The purpose of these पुराण-s was to teach morals and provide inducements for the worship of different gods. The

पुराण-s derive their source from common myths and legends that have been popular from the Vedic times. These myths might have been sung and preserved by bards known as सूत-s.

The पुराण-s narrate various disconnected legends and anecdotes in a single work. They pay more attention to the glorification of the gods and on the moral discourses. Many times they deviate from the main topic and discuss secular topics also.

According to the स्मृति-s, the पुराण-s are known as उपबृंहण-s (exposition of the teachings) of the Vedas.

इतिहासपुराणाभ्यां वेदो समुपबृंहयेत् । (महाभारतम्- आदिपर्व)

Definition of the पुराणम् - पद्मपुराणम् defines पुराणम् as -

पुरा परम्परां वक्ति पुराणं तेन वै स्मृतम् ।

निरुक्तिमस्य यो वेद सर्वपापैः प्रमुच्यते ॥

The मत्स्यपुराणम् and the अमरकोशः define the पुराणम् as a work that deals with the five topics :

सर्गश्च प्रतिसर्गश्च वंशो मन्वन्तराणि च ।

वंशानुचरितं चैव पुराणं पञ्चलक्षणम् ॥

- (1) सर्गः - The creation of the universe.
- (2) प्रतिसर्गः - Secondary creations, mostly re-creations after dissolution.
- (3) वंशः - Genealogy of gods and sages.
- (4) मन्वन्तरः - The creation of the human race and the first human beings. The rule or reigns of the Manus' rule, 71 celestial Yugas or 308,448,000 years.
- (5) वंशानुचरितम् - the histories of dynasties that are said to have originated from the Sun and the Moon.

But ब्रह्मवैवर्तपुराणम् informs that the above is the definition of उपपुराणम् and it furnishes additional ten characteristics as the definition of the पुराणम् । (एतदुपपुराणानां लक्षणं विदुर्बुधाः).

भागवतपुराणम् furnishes a different definition of the पुराणम् consisting of ten characteristics.

सर्गोऽस्याथ विसर्गश्च वृत्ती रक्षान्तराणि च ।

वंशो वंशानुचरितं संस्था हेतुरपाश्रयः ॥

दशभिर्लक्षणैर्युक्तं पुराणं तद्विदो विदुः । (भागवतपुराणम्-स्कन्धः-१२)

Creation, origin of organisms, profession (means of survival), defence (incarnation of god for defending devotees), अपाश्रयः (परब्रह्मस्वरूपम्).

It further explains each characteristic as follows :

सर्गः - अव्याकृतगुणक्षोभान्महतास्त्रिवृतोमः ।

भूतमातेन्द्रियार्थानां सम्भवः सर्गः उच्यते ॥ ११ ॥

The evolution of महत् through the disturbance of the equilibrium of the three गुण-s, of the three forms of अहङ्कार-s (from महत्), evolution of five subtle elements is known as सर्गः ।

विसर्गः - पुरुषानुगृहीतानामेतेसां वासनामयः ।

विसर्गोऽयं समाहारो बीजाद् बीजं चराचरम् ॥ १२ ॥

विसर्गः is the collective creation brought about by the latent impressions of past कर्म, proceeding from seed to seed as continuum due to the favour of god.

वृत्तिः - वृत्तिर्भूतानि भूतानां चराणामचराणानि च ।

कृता स्वेन नृणां तत्र कामाच्चोदनयापि वा ॥ १३ ॥

वृत्तिः is the endeavour of humans due to nature, desire or due to injunctions of the scripture.

रक्षा - रक्षा अच्युतावतारेह विश्वस्यानु युगे युगे ।

तिर्यङ् मर्त्यर्षिदेवेषु हन्यन्ते यैस्त्रयीद्विषः ॥ १४ ॥

The incarnation of the Lord अच्युतः among birds, humans etc. For the purpose of the protection (of the virtuous) and for killing the enemies who decry the Vedas.

मन्वन्तरं - मन्वन्तरं मनुर्देवता मनुपुत्राः सुरेश्वरः ।

ऋषयोऽंशावतारश्च हरेः षड्विधमुच्यते ॥ १५ ॥

The period over which the मनु-s, the sons of मनुः, इन्द्रः, the seven sages and the partial manifestations of god is characterised as मन्वन्तरम् ।

वंशः, वंशानुचरितम्- राजां ब्रह्मप्रसूतानां वंशस्रैकालिकोन्वयः ।

वंशानुचरितं तेषां वृत्तं वंशवराश्च ये ॥ १६ ॥

The lineage sprung from Lord ब्रह्मा extending over the past, the present and the future is known as वंशः । The connected account of such kings and their descendents is known as वंशानुचरितम् ।

संस्था - नैमित्तिकः प्राकृतिको नित्यान्तिको लयः ।

संस्थेति कविभिः प्रोक्ता चतुर्धास्य स्वभावतः ॥ १७ ॥

Four-fold dissolution of the universe - occasional, natural, eternal or constant and radical - is remembered as संस्था by the wise.

हेतुः - हेतुर्जीवोऽस्य सर्गादेरविद्याकर्मकारकः ।

यं चानुशयिनं प्राहुरव्याकृतमृतापरे ॥ १८ ॥

The हेतुः (cause) of creation (of the universe) is the जीवः, the doer of action prompted by ignorance, which some call, due to unrequited कर्म ।

अपाश्रयः - व्यतिरेकान्वयो यस्य जाग्रत्स्वप्नसुषुप्तिषु ।

मायामयेषु तद् ब्रह्म जीववृत्तिषु अपाश्रयः ॥ १९ ॥

अपाश्रयः is ब्रह्मन् present in all the three states of जीवः - wakefulness, dream and deep slumber- as well as in all substances which are products of माया ।

Period of the पुराण-s : Since the present versions of the पुराण-s contain old legends as well as later additions, it is difficult to ascertain the date of the original version. According to Pargiter, the "original पुराणम्" may date to the time of the final redaction of the Vedas.

The ब्राह्मण-literature, छान्दोग्योपनिषद् and धर्मसूत्र-s refer to इतिहासपुराणौ as a class of literature and they even quote from some पुराण-s. Some धर्मसूत्र-s mention पुराण-s and even quote from पुराण-s . आपस्तम्बधर्मसूत्रम्

mentions भविष्यद्-पुराणम् in chapter II. But since Akbar and Humayun are mentioned in the extant version, they feel that these might have been added later. The महाभारतम् and हरिवंशः make a mention of the 18 पुराण-s. Since बाणभट्टः refers to वायुपुराणम् by name that should have become popular well before that period.(7th cen.A.D.). F.E.Pargiter believed the "original पुराणम् " may date to the time of the final redaction of the Vedas. R.C.Hazra feels that the पुराण-s might have been revised from time to time. It is mentioned in the महाभारतम् that the sage व्यासः had composed the पुराण-s first the महाभारतम् after that only.

अष्टादशपुराणानि कृत्वा सत्यवतीसुतः ।

पश्चाद् भारतमाख्यानं चक्रे तदुपबृंहितम् ॥ (महाभारतम् - आदिपर्व)

The antiquity of the पुराण-s are vouchsafed by a further statement of the मत्स्यपुराणम् that Lord ब्रह्मा, at the beginning of the कल्पः recollects and reveals the पुराण-s first and then only the Vedas.

पुराणं सर्वशास्त्राणां प्रथमं ब्रह्मणा स्मृतम् ।

अनन्तरं च वक्त्रेभ्यो वेदास्तस्य विनिर्गताः ॥ (मत्स्यपुराणम्)

From this, we can very well conclude that the पुराण-class of literature was well in vogue during महाभारतम् and sūtra period. The extant पुराण-s may, at the best, be redacted versions of the earlier पुराण-s with the information of the then rulers and dynasties. The sage व्यासः is mentioned as the author of all the 18 पुराण-s.

Since all the eighteen पुराण-s are sectarian in character, they are assigned a period not earlier than 3rd cen. B.C.. Some of the पुराण-s refer to Buddhism and other religions and mention Maurya, Gupta and other dynasties, but none of them refer to the king Harsha of 7th cen. A.D.

कुमरिलभट्टः and श्रीशङ्कराचार्यः consider the पुराण-s as books of authority and term them as स्मृति-s. Since, at least two or three centuries

would require for the पुराण-s to become popular and attain the status of स्मृति-s, the पुराण-s are assigned a date between 3rd cen, B.C. and 6th cen. A.D. Alberuni shows his familiarity of पुराण-s like वायुपुराणम्, आदित्यपुराणम्, मत्स्यपुराणम् and विष्णुपुराणम् ।

Thus we may conclude that the original पुराण-s were composed well before sūtra period (before 800 B.C) and they had attained the final shape before 7th cen.A.D.

Classification of the पुराण-s : Apart from the 18 महापुराण-s ascribed to the sage व्यासः, a further list of 18 पुराण-s, termed as उपपुराण-s, are ascribed to the sage पराशरः । Most of the पुराण-s furnish the list of 18 महापुराण-s. The list differ because of inclusion some उपपुराण-s under महापुराण-list.

The 18 पुराण-s usually enumerated are : 1. विष्णुपुराणम्, 2. नारदपुराणम्, 3. पाद्मपुराणम्, 4. गरुडपुराणम्, 5. वराहपुराणम्, 6. श्रीमद् भागवतपुराणम्, 7. ब्रह्मपुराणम्, 8. ब्रह्मवैवर्तपुराणम्, 9. ब्रह्माण्डपुराणम्, 10. मार्कण्डेयपुराणम्, 11. भविष्यपुराणम्, 12. वामनपुराणम्, 13. शिवपुराणम्, 14. लिङ्गपुराणम्, 15. स्कन्दपुराणम्, 16. अग्निपुराणम्, 17. मत्स्यपुराणम् and 18. कूर्मपुराणम् ।

कूर्मपुराणम् inserts वायुपुराणम् in the place of अग्निपुराणम् । अग्निपुराणम् inserts वायुपुराणम् in the place of शिवपुराणम् । वराहपुराणम् inserts वायुपुराणम् and नृसिंहपुराणम् and omits गरुडपुराणम् and ब्रह्माण्डपुराणम् । The advocates of देवीभागवतम् argue that श्रीमद्भागवतम् was composed by बोपदेवः, court poet of the king हेमाद्रिः, the king of देवगिरिः । (13th cen.A.D.)

Further, the महापुराण-s are classified according the three aspects of the divine त्रिमूर्ति-s -

(1) ब्राह्मपुराण-s : ब्रह्मपुराणम्, ब्रह्माण्डपुराणम्, ब्रह्मवैवर्तपुराणम्, मार्कण्डेयपुराणम्, भविष्यपुराणम्, वामनपुराणम् ।

(2) वैष्णवपुराण-s : विष्णुपुराणम्, भागवतपुराणम्, नारदपुराणम्, गरुडपुराणम्, पद्मपुराणम्, वराहपुराणम् ।

(3) शैवपुराण-s : शिवपुराणम्, लिङ्गपुराणम्, स्कन्दपुराणम्, अग्निपुराणम्, मत्स्यपुराणम्, कूर्मपुराणम् ।

According to the पद्मपुराणम्, the texts may be classified in accordance with the three गुण-s or qualities - सत्त्व, रजस् and तमस् । The वैष्णव-पुराण-s are classed as सात्त्विक पुराण-s, since they glorify Lord विष्णुः, the ब्रह्मपुराण-s are classed as राजसपुराण-s, since they glorify Lord ब्रह्मा and the शैव-पुराण-s are classed as तामसपुराण-s, since they glorify Lord शिवः ।

But in the extant पुराण-s, except लिङ्गपुराणम्, शिवपुराणम्, विष्णुपुराणम् and भागवतपुराणम्, all other पुराण-s contain stories related to Lord शिवः and Lord विष्णुः and hymns addressed to these. Sometimes we all find stories related to पार्वती as महाकाली or महिषासुरमर्दिनी ।

Contents of the पुराण-s : The पुराण-s are the richest collection of traditional stories, myths, legends, lives of saints, kings and great men, allegories and chronicles of great historical events and teachings based on the spiritual philosophy of the वेदाः and the उपनिषत्-s. The पुराण-s are in the form of conversation between two persons, throw light on various topics connected with the Hindu way of life, Hindu culture, and religious sacraments, rituals, festivals, pilgrimage, holy places, holy waters, ancient history, cosmology, philosophy, glorification of a particular deity by narrating the incarnations of the deity etc. The religious and moral percepts are taught with many stories. Because of this reason, the पुराण-s gained great popularity among the common people.

All पुराण-s contain common topics like time-division plan, cosmology, creation of the universe, geography of the earth, etc.

Time-division plan in the पुराण-s- The time duration from the lowest

निमेषः to the period of ब्रह्मा is explained in all the पुराण-s. They are :

काष्ठा पञ्चदशाख्याता निमेषा मुनिसत्तम ।

काष्ठास्त्रिंशत्कला तास्तु त्रिंशन्मौहूर्तिको विधिः ॥

तावत्संख्यैरहोरात्रं मुहूर्तैर्मानुषं स्मृतम् ।

अहोरात्राणि तावन्ति मासः पक्षद्वयात्मकः ॥

तैः षड्भिरयनं वर्षं द्वेऽयने दक्षिणोत्तरे ।

अयनं दक्षिणं रात्रिर्देवानामुत्तरं दिनम् ॥ [विष्णुपुराणम् - 1.3 (8-10)]

15 निमेषः-s (twinklings of the eye) = 1 काष्ठा ।

30 काष्ठा-s = 1 कला,

30 कला-s = 1 मुहूर्तः ।

30 मुहूर्त-s = 1 अहोरात्रम् (day and night)

30 अहोरात्र-s (days) = 1 month (divided into two पक्ष-s).

6 मास-s (months) = 1 अयनम्

दक्षिणायनम् = night of gods

उत्तरायणम् = day-time of gods

2 अयन-s = 1 वर्षः (year)

1 human year = 1 day of the gods

360 divine days = 1 divine year

दिव्यैर्वर्षसहस्रेस्तु कृतत्रेतादिसंज्ञितम् ।

चतुर्युगं द्वादशभिस्तद्विभागं निबोध मे ॥

चत्वारि त्रीणि द्वे चैकं कृतादिषु यथाक्रमम् ।

दिव्याब्दानां सहस्राणि युगेष्वाहुः पुराविदः ॥

तत्प्रमाणैः शतैः सन्ध्या पूर्वा तत्राभिधीयते ।

सन्धांशकश्च तत् तुल्यो युगस्यानन्तरो हि सः ॥

सन्ध्यासन्धांशयोरन्तर्यः कालो मुनिसत्तम ।

युगाख्यः स तु विज्ञेयः कृतत्रेतादिसंज्ञितः ॥

कृतं त्रेता द्वापरञ्च कलिश्चैव चतुर्युगम् ।

प्रोच्यते तत् सहस्रञ्च ब्रह्मणो दिवसं मुने ॥ [विष्णुपुराणम् - 1.3. (11-15)]

12,000 divine years = 1 महायुगः (total of 4 युग-s)

(12000 divine years x 360 days = 43,20,000 divine years)

कृतयुगः = 4000 divine years

त्रेतायुगः = 3000 divine year

द्वापरयुगः = 2000 divine years

कलियुगः = 1000 divine years

Total = 10,000 years + 2,000 years (सन्ध्या and सन्ध्यांशः years) = 12,000 years.

The periods that precede a युगः is called सन्ध्या and it is as many hundred years as there are thousand years in a युगः ।

The period that follows a युगः is called सन्ध्यांशः and it is also as many hundred years as there are thousand years in a युगः ।

Thus for कृतयुगः, सन्ध्या and सन्ध्यांशः period = 400 + 400 = 800 years.

For त्रेतायुगः, सन्ध्या and सन्ध्यांशः period = 300 + 300 years = 600 years

For द्वापरयुगः, सन्ध्या and सन्ध्यांशः period = 200 + 200 years = 400 years

For कलियुगः, सन्ध्या and सन्ध्यांशः period = 100 + 100 years = 200 years.

Total of all सन्ध्या-s and सन्ध्यांश-period = 800 + 600 + 400 + 200 = 2,000 years.

Thus a युगः is the intervening period between सन्ध्या and सन्ध्यांशः and a cycle of four such युगः-s = 1 महायुगः

Thus कृतयुगः = 4000 + 400 + 400 = 4800 divine years = 4800 x 360 = 17,28,000

Thus त्रेतायुगः = 3000 + 300 + 300 = 3600 divine years = 3600 x 360 = 12,96,000

Thus द्वापरयुगः = 2000 + 200 + 200 = 2400 divine years = 2400 x 360 = 8,64,000

Thus कलियुगः = 1000 + 100 + 100 = 1200 divine years = 1200 x 360 = 4,32,000

1000 महायुग-s = 1 day-time of Lord ब्रह्मा, also known as कल्पः (4.32 billion solar years.

ब्रह्मणो दिवसे ब्रह्मन् ! मनवश्च चतुर्दश ।

भवन्ति परिमाणञ्च तेषां कालकृतं शृणु ॥

सप्तर्षयः सुराः शक्रो मनुस्तत्सूनवो नृपाः ।

एककाले हि सृज्यन्ते संह्रियन्ते च पूर्ववत् ॥

चतुर्युगानां संख्याता साधिका ह्येकसप्ततिः ।

मन्वन्तरं मनोःकालः सुरादीनाञ्च सप्तम ॥ [विष्णुपुराणम् - 1.3. (16-18)]

Another 1000 महायुग-s = 1 night time of Lord ब्रह्मा

The day time of Lord ब्रह्मा is ruled by 14 मनु-s.

Thus each मनुः rules for $71\frac{3}{4}$ महायुग-s.

The period of each मनुः is known as मन्वन्तरम् ।

The names of the 14 मनु-s are - स्वायम्भुवः, स्वरोचिष, औत्तम, तामस, रैवत, चाषुस, वैवस्वत, सावर्णि, दक्ष-सावर्णि, ब्रह्म-सावर्णि, धर्म-सावर्णि, रुद्र-सावर्णि, रौच्य and भौत्यः।

During the period of each मनुः a new इन्द्रः, seven ऋषि-s and devas are born.

30 such days = 1 month of Lord ब्रह्मा

12 such months = 1 year of Lord ब्रह्मा

100 such years is the life span of Lord ब्रह्मा

The life span of Lord ब्रह्मा is divided into two halves - प्रथमपरार्धः (first half) and द्वितीयपरार्धः (second half).

According to this calendar, we are now in द्वितीय परार्धः (the second half of the life span of Lord ब्रह्मा).

The present period of मनुः is that of वैवस्वतमनुः. So far six periods of मनुः had elapsed and the present period is that of वैवस्वतमनुः ।

The present युगः is 1st quarter of 28th कलियुगः ।

Creation according to the पुराण-s - Creation, according to the पुराण-s is of two kinds - primary and secondary creation. Primary creation deals with evolution of तन्मात्र-s (subtle elements) from प्रकृतिः and secondary creation relates to the creation from तन्मात्र-s.

As the Lord विष्णुः is eternal, so also the origin of universe, its existence and annihilation are also unending processes. During the period of प्रलयः (dissolution), the nature exists in a state of equilibrium and there was neither day nor night, neither earth nor sky and neither darkness nor

light. It is then that the Lord desires to create the universe and appears as पुरुषः ।

In the beginning, all the subtle-elements were present in the great golden egg, which came into existence because of the inspiration of the Lord. As this egg increased in size, it formed the base as प्रकृतिः in which, Lord विष्णुः Himself entered as हिरण्यगर्भः and from the unmanifested प्रकृतिः, महत् is evolved. From महत्, अहङ्कारः is evolved . अहङ्कारः is of two kinds - सात्त्विकाहङ्कारः also called वैकृताहङ्कारः and तामसाहङ्कारः called भूतादि । From वैकृताहङ्कारः aided by रजस्, ten ज्ञानेन्द्रिय-s (sense-organs), ten कर्मेन्द्रिय-s (motor-organs) and मनस् (mind) are produced. The five ज्ञानेन्द्रिय-s are श्रोत्रम् (ear), चक्षुः (eyes), घ्राणम् (nose), रसनम् (tongue) and त्वक् (skin). The five कर्मेन्द्रिय-s are वाक् (mouth), पाणिः (hands), पादः (feet), पायुः (excretory-organ) and उपस्था (generative-organ) From तामसाहङ्कारः, the five तन्मात्र-s (subtle-elements) are produced. The five तन्मात्र-s are शब्दतन्मात्रम्, स्पर्शतन्मात्रम्, रूपतन्मात्रम्, रसतन्मात्रम् and गन्धतन्मात्रम् । From शब्दतन्मात्रम्, आकाशः (ether) arises, स्पर्शतन्मात्रम् arises from आकाशः । From स्पर्शतन्मात्रम्, वायुः (air) is evolved. From वायुः arises रूपतन्मात्रम् and from रूपतन्मात्रम् arises तेजः (fire). From तेजः arises रसतन्मात्रम् and from रसतन्मात्रम् arises आपः (water) is evolved. From water गन्धतन्मात्रम् arises and from गन्धतन्मात्रम्, पृथिवी (the earth) is evolved.

When the universe comes into existence, Lord विष्णुः fosters it till the end of कल्पः-period. At the end of कल्पः, He Himself devours the entire physical elements in रुद्रः appearance. During that time, He inundates the entire universe and Himself sleeps on आदिशेषः in क्षीरसागरम् । When he awakes once again, He begins the process of creation in the appearance of Lord ब्रह्मा ।

Description of Cosmos in the पुराण-s- The cosmography of the पुराण-s includes descriptions of the astronomical universe, the solar system and the

fourteen worlds or realms of creation. According to Purānic tradition, there exist six worlds above the भूलोकः (the earth) and seven worlds below the भूलोकः । Thus there are 14 worlds in the universe. The six worlds above भूलोकः are भुवर्लोकः, सुवर्लोकः, महर्लोकः, जनोलोकः, तपोलोकः and सत्यलोकः and the seven worlds below भूलोकः are अतलः, वितलः, सुतलः, रसातलः, तलातलः, महातलज् and पातालः । The पुराण-s describe in detail the extent of these worlds, their inhabitants etc. Below पातालः resides Lord विष्णुः in the form शेषः, also known as अनन्तः । He bears the entire world like a diadem, upon his head. At the end of कल्पः- period, fire emanates from his mouth and devours the three worlds.

Below the seven down-worlds are many hells.

पातालानामधश्चास्ते विष्णोर्या तामसी तनुः ।

शेषाख्या यदुगान् वक्तुं न शक्ता दैत्यदानवाः ॥

योऽनन्तः पठ्यते सिद्धैर्देवी देवर्षिपूजितः ।

स सहस्रशिरा व्यक्तस्वस्तिकामलभूषणः ॥

कल्पान्ते यस्य वक्त्रेभ्यो विषानलशिखोज्ज्वलः ।

सङ्कर्षणात्मको रुद्रो निष्क्रम्याति जगत्रयम् ॥

स विभ्रच्छेखरीभूतमशेषक्षितिमण्डलम् ।

आस्ते पातालमूलस्थः शेषोऽशेषसुरार्चितः ॥ [विष्णुपुराणम्- ॥.5.(13,14,20]

Geography as described in the पुराण-s- The geography is one of the chief subjects discussed in all the s. According to Purānic tradition, भूलोकः (the earth) consisted of seven द्वीप-s (islands) namely :- जम्बूद्वीपः, प्लक्षद्वीपः, शाल्मलिद्वीपः, कुशद्वीपः, कौञ्चद्वीपः, शाकद्वीपः and पुष्करद्वीपः । Each of these द्वीप-s , is divided into a number of वर्ष- (continents). These द्वीप-s are surrounded by seven oceans containing salty-water, sugarcane-juice, wine, clarified butter, curd, milk and pure water. जम्बूद्वीपः is separated from the next प्लक्षद्वीपः by an ocean of salt. प्लक्षद्वीपः in turn forms a concentric circle surrounding the

जम्बूद्वीपः and so on to give a proper form to the total seven islands. The पुराण-s provide ample information about all the seven द्वीप-s, like their their measurements, their mountains and rivers, their residents, their presiding deities, the longevity and general standard of morality of the people, and other details.

जम्बूप्लक्षाह्वयो द्वीपौ शाल्मलिश्चापरो द्विज ।

कुश-कौञ्चस्तथा शाकः पुष्करश्चैव सप्तमः ॥

एते द्वीपाः समुद्रैस्तु सप्त सप्तभिरावृताः ।

लवणेषु-सुरा-सर्षिर्दधि-दुग्धजलई समम् ॥ [विष्णुपुराणम् - ॥ 2.(5-6)]

Beyond the sea of pure-water, is golden land, where no living being reside. Thereafter extends the लोकालोकः mountain and beyond it, is perpetual darkness. This is surrounded by the shell of the great egg.

स्वादूदकस्य परतो दृश्यतेऽलोकसंस्थितिः ।

द्विगुणा काञ्चनभूमिः सर्वजन्तुविवर्जिता ॥

लोकालोकस्तथा शैलो युजनायुतविस्तृतः ।

ततस्तमः समावृत्य तंशैलं सर्वतः स्थितम् ।

ततश्चाडकटाहेन समन्तात् परिवेष्टितम् ॥ [विष्णुपुराणम् - ॥.4 (94-96)]

The जम्बूद्वीपः, occupies the central position, among the seven द्वीपः, and in its middle is the golden mountain called मेरुः । According to the Purānic tradition, the Mount Meru is considered as the axis of the spherical earth. To the south of Mount मेरुः are - हिमवान्, हेमकूटः and निषधः mountains. To the north of मेरुः are नीलः, श्वेतः and श्रृङ्गी । These mountains branch out in different directions like the petals of a lotus.

जम्बूद्वीपः समस्तानां एतेषां मध्यस्थितः ।

तस्यापि मेरुर्मेत्रेय ! मध्ये कनकपर्वतः ॥

हिमवान् हेमकूटश्च निषधश्चास्य दक्षिणे ।

नीलः श्वेतश्च श्रृङ्गी च उत्तरे वर्षपर्वताः ॥ [विष्णुपुराणम् - ॥.2. (7 & 10)]

The जम्बूद्वीपः is divided into nine वर्ष-s (subcontinents). To the south of मेरु:-mountain are three continents - भारतम्, किंपुरुषम् and हरिवर्षम् । To the north of मेरुः are the three continents- रम्यकम्, हिरण्यकम् and कुरुवर्षम् । The continent of भद्राश्वः is in front of it. Behind it is the continent named केतुमाला । In the centre, is इलावृतम् । But the पुराण-s praise the भारतवर्षम् as the कर्मभूमिः or place of work. It is a favorable land for those who aspire for heaven or final liberation.

Apart from the above topics, all the पुराण-s describe important kings of both solar and lunar races, churning of milky ocean. Besides, they also contain legends anecdotes related to the deities they glorify. Some पुराण-s like अग्निपुराणम् contain chapters on technical subjects like आयुर्वेदः, वृक्षायुर्वेदः, गजशास्त्रम्, अश्वशास्त्रम्, वास्तुकला, रत्नपरीक्षा, व्याकरणम्, छन्दस् etc.

The पुराण-s do not have much literary view as a piece fine literature. But, they throw more light on the society, culture, history, religion, customs of the age. They are also source books for the later poets and dramatists of the later ages. The three आचार्य-s view the पुराण-s as books of authority and profusely quote from the पुराण-s. The पुराण-s have exercised tremendous influence on the religious life of the respective sects and the पुराण-s are even now read with all devotion and the works are expounded again and again.

One can say with all certainty that both the इतिहास-s and the पुराण-s constitute the ancient culture of India.

1. विष्णुपुराणम् (23,000 verses) - This is considered to be the oldest of the पुराण-s. Since Maurya dynasty is mentioned, scholars are of the view that this might have been composed around 2nd cen. B.C. V.R. Ramachandra Dikshithar places this pu around 5th cen.B.C. This पुराणम् was narrated by the sage पराशरः to his disciple मैत्रेयः and describes the events of बराहकल्पः period. This follows the definition of पुराणम् very closely. It is often

considered to be the most important of all the eighteen पुराण-s and is given the name पुराणरत्नम् (gem among the पुराण-s).

It is divided into six sections. The first section describes the time-division-plan, primary and secondary creations, description of अमृतमन्थनम् and narrates ध्रुवचरितम् and his descendants पृथुः, प्रह्लादः etc. The second section explains the 14 worlds, the geography of the universe, seven islands, and nations contained therein and the nether worlds. Further, the legends of भरतः, ऋभुः and निदाघः are also described .

The third section explains the 14 periods, the Vedas and its re-arrangement by व्यासः composition of the पुराणसंहिता and explains some sacraments, purification ceremonies and श्राद्ध-ceremony. The fourth section gives an account of some important kings of solar and lunar races including the future dynasties and kings of कलियुगः । After the 9 Nanda dynasty kings who would rule for 100 years, the 10 Maurya dynasty kings will rule for 137 years. This will be followed by Shunga dynasty (12 kings would rule for 112 years). Later 4 Kanva dynasty kings would rule for 45 years. This would be followed by Andhrabhrtya dynasty kings. 30 kings would rule for 451 years. This is followed by Abhiras, Gardhabhas, Shakas, Yavanas, Tusharas, Mundas and Maunas. The fifth section elaborately describes the story of Lord कृष्णः । The sixth section explains the nature of Kali-age and nature of elemental dissolution .

This पुराणम् was frequently quoted by श्रीशङ्कराचार्यः and श्रीरामानुजाचार्यः ।

2.नारदपुराणम् (25,000 verses) - In this पुराणम्, the sages सनत्कुमारः and others expound to नारदः, the doctrine of विष्णुभक्तिः । It describes the events occurred in बृहत्कल्पः-period. The importance of this doctrine of विष्णुभक्तिः is illustrated by many stories. The ceremonies like एकादशी-माहात्म्यम् and the रुक्माङ्गदचरितम् are found in this पुराणम् ।

3. पद्मपुराणम् (55,000 verses) -This पुराणम् is one of the big पुराण-s. This पुराणम् is divided into seven major sections - सृष्टिखण्डः, भूमिखण्डः, स्वर्गखण्डः, ब्रह्मखण्डः, पातालखण्डः, उत्तरखण्डम् and क्रियाखण्डम् ।

The सृष्टिखण्डः (Book of the Universe) is in the form of a dialogue between भीष्मः and the sage पुलस्त्यः । It describes the primary and secondary creations, time-division-plan, वामनावतारकथा, नृसिंहावतारकथा, अमृतमन्थनम्, दक्षयज्ञकथा and कालकेयवधः । It also contains a detailed description of पुष्करम्, a famous place of pilgrimage.

The भूमिखण्डः (Book of the Earth) has a description of पृथिवी (the earth) and tales of kings like पृथुः, नहुषः and ययातिः and of several sages.

The स्वर्गखण्डः (Book of Heaven) contains details of the sequence of creation of the cosmos, It also describes the significance and importance of holy places and geographical features of जम्बूद्वीपः, including its mountains and greatness of holy rivers like कावेरी, नर्मदा, यमुना, गयामारात्म्यम्, प्रयागमाहात्म्यम्, वाराणसीमाहात्म्यम्, चतुराश्रमनियमाः ।

The ब्रह्मखण्डः describes कार्तिकमासमाहात्म्यम्, जयन्तीव्रतकथा, समुद्रमन्थनम्, the birth of ऐरावतः, कृष्णजन्माष्टमीव्रतकथा etc.

Theand the पातालखण्डः (Book of the Underworld) narrates the life story of श्रीरामः, an incarnation of श्रीविष्णुः, वैशाखमाहात्म्यम्, रत्नग्रीवराजवृत्तान्तम्, श्रीकृष्णचरितम् etc.

The उत्तरखण्डः presents the metaphysical aspects of religion in the form of a dialogue between Lord शिवः and पार्वती । It describes the mystic lotus from which Lord ब्रह्मा had sprung. The work derives its title from this. This part also contains another version of विष्णुसहस्रनामम् (1000 names of Lord विष्णुः) (not the महाभारत-version) and श्रीरामसहस्रनामम् (1000 names of श्रीरामः). The name of this section is also applied to the उत्तरखण्ड region of the Himalayas over which Lord शिवः and goddess पार्वती preside at the source of the यमुना and गङ्गा rivers, abodes of Lord विष्णुः at Badrinath and Lord

शिवः at Kedarnath, and the entry of the sacred river गङ्गा into the plains of India at Hardwar. Besides, it also contains कार्तिकमासमाहात्म्यम्, माघमासमाहात्म्यम्, श्रीशैलमाहात्म्यम्, गङ्गामाहात्म्यम्, चातुर्मास्यव्रतवर्णनम्, जलन्धरकथा, पञ्चगन्धर्वकन्यावृत्तान्तम्, story of the previous birth of सत्यभामा etc.

The last section called क्रियायोगसारः narrates various fasts, ceremonies and rituals to be observed by the Vaiṣnavites. The story of श्रीरामः and his ancestors as well as the story शकुन्तला, found in this book agrees with the works of कालिदासः । It clearly refers to the भागवत-cult and the local traditions of many places. Besides it also describes the greatness of many holy waters of Bharat.

4. गरुडपुराणम् - (19,000 verses) - This पुराणम् was narrated by Lord विष्णुः to गरुडः । The गरुडपुराणम् is a वैष्णवपुराणम् । This पुराणम् is divided into two parts - पूर्वकाण्डम् (first part) and उत्तरकाण्डम् (subsequent part). Each काण्डम् has several अध्याय-s (chapters). It is also divided as आचारकाण्डम्, प्रेतकाण्डम् (धर्मकाण्डम्) and ब्रह्मकाण्डम् (मोक्षकाण्डम्). आचारकाण्डम् consists the three संहिता-s - अगस्त्यसंहिता, बृहस्पतिसंहिता (नीतिसारः) and धन्वन्तरिसंहिता । आचारकाण्डम् describes creation, worship of शिवः, सुदर्शनः, सूर्यः, गरुडविद्या, गायत्रीन्यासम्, characteristics of शालग्राम-stones, installation of images, geography of India, basics of Astrology and सामुद्रिकालक्षणम् । In अगस्त्यसंहिता, gemmology is described in 12 chapters. Besides, it also contains गयामाहात्म्यम् and duties of four modes of life. बृहस्पतिसंहिता describes many व्रत-s, like अनङ्गत्रयोदशीव्रतम्, अखण्डद्वादशीव्रतम्, रम्भातृतीयाव्रतम्, मासोपवासव्रतम्, चातुर्मास्यव्रतम्, शिवरात्रीव्रतम्, एकादशीव्रतम्, श्रावणद्वादशीव्रतम् । Besides, it also contains geneology of solar and lunar dynasties and brief history of श्रीरामावतरः and श्रीकृष्णावतारः । धन्वन्तरिसंहिता describes in 59 chapters the निदानम् of various diseases, and medicinal treatment. Besides, grammar, prosody, युगधर्मः, dissolution and importance of विष्णुभक्तिः are discussed.

The प्रेतकाण्डम् explains with the life beyond death and highlights the importance of funeral ceremonies and the greatness of various gifts. It also cautions the human race against righteous living by describing various hells for different sins. मोक्षकाण्डम् describes the oneness of ब्रह्म, विष्णु and शिवः and glorifies विष्णु:-worship.

5. वराहपुराणम् (24,000 verses) - This पुराणम् was narrated by Lord विष्णु: in the form of वराहः (boar) to पृथिवी (Mother Earth). It narrates the events occurred in मानवकल्प:-the period. It describes the rescue of Mother earth from Asuras and also the daily routine of the devotees of Lord विष्णु: ।

6. श्रीमद्भागवतपुराणम् (18,000 verses) - This पुराणम् is the most popular among the पुराण-s. It is read widely and frequent expositions and discourses are held in all parts of the country and heard with devotion by the devotees of Lord विष्णु: and by the devotees of Lord कृष्णः । This पुराणम् is divided into 12 books known as स्कन्धः । Its primary focus is the process of भक्तियोगः (loving devotion to the Supreme Lord विष्णु: । The sage शुकब्रह्म, the son of the sage व्यासः, imparts the knowledge of Supreme Godhead and his incarnations of Lord विष्णु: to the king परीक्षित (Grandson of अर्जुनः and son of अभिमन्युः), who was cursed by a Brāhmin to die in seven days.

The contents in brief is as follows : स्कन्धः - 1 describes the previous birth of the sage नारदः, killing of the sons of द्रौपदी by अश्वत्थामा, श्रीकृष्णः saving परीक्षित, the birth of परीक्षित, the departure of श्रीकृष्णः to द्वारका, the retirement of धृतराष्ट्रः and गान्दारी to the forest, curse incurred by परीक्षित and finally परीक्षित renouncing the world and asking शुकः as to what one shall meditate upon at the time of death.

स्कन्धः- 2 describes the manifestation of cosmic form of Lord

विष्णुः, description of creation of universe and cosmos. स्कन्धः - 3 describes the creation by ब्रह्मा, time-division-plan and वराहवतारकथा । स्कन्धः - 3 describes कपिलावतारः and explains सांख्यः philosophy. In स्कन्धः- 4, the दक्षयज्ञविनाशकथा, ध्रुवचरितम्, पृथु-पुरञ्जनकथा, प्रचेतस-कथा are described. In स्कन्धः-5, the story of ऋषभदेवः, जडभरतोपाख्यानम्, geography of the earth, सप्तद्वीपाः, description of stellar sphere, upper worlds, nether worlds, and infernal worlds are described. स्कन्धः-6 describes अजामिलोपाख्यानम् and वृत्स्वधकथा । Besides, नारायणकवचम् is also contained in this स्कन्धः । स्कन्धः- 7 describes प्रह्लादचरितम् and नरसिंहावतारकथा । स्कन्धः-8 describes various मन्वन्तर-s and contains the stories of गजेन्द्रमोक्षः and अमृतमन्थनम् and वामनावतारकथा ।

स्कन्धः- 9 contains the stories of नाभागः, अम्बरीषः, सगरः, भगीरथः, रामावतारकथा, description of lunar dynasty kings, the stories of ऋचिकः-जमदग्निः-परशुरामः, विश्वामित्रकथा, ययाति-पूरुः, दुष्यन्तः, भरतः, रन्तिदेवः, पाञ्चालः etc. स्कन्धः - 10 describes कृष्णावतारः in two parts. स्कन्धः -11 describes the curse of the ऋषि-s on यदुकुलम्, the ascent of Lord कृष्णः to His abode, ज्ञानयोगः, भक्तियोगः, path of devotion and meditation. स्कन्धः- 12 describes, characteristics of कलियुगः, kings of कलियुगः, vanity life, four-fould-प्रलयः, classification of the Vedas and the experience of the sage मार्कण्डेयः with माया and the meditation of Brahman.

कपिलः and बुद्धः are referred as incarnations of Lord विष्णुः, which points to a date when the animosity towards Buddhism had completely died out. श्रीशङ्कराचार्यः (8th cen.A.D.) and श्रीरामानुजाचार्यः (10th cen.A.D.) quote profusely from विष्णुपुराणम् and not from श्रीमद्भागवतम् । श्रीमध्वाचार्यः (12th cen.A.D.) considers this पुराणम् as an authority like the महाभारतम् । The date of the पुराणम् is fixed between 8th and 10 cen. A.D., since it would have taken at least two centuries to attain the high status equal to the महाभारतम् ।

श्रीमद्भागवतम् speaks of several topics that have in modern times been topics of scientific speculation and research such as Time Dilation (a topic in modern physics), the development of the embryo etc.

7. ब्रह्मपुराणम् (10,000 verses) – This पुराणम् is also known as आदिपुराणम् and finds first place in the list of 18 पुराण-s. This was narrated by Lord ब्रह्मा to मरीचिः or दक्षप्रजापतिः । It is sometimes called सौरपुराणम्, since it gives more emphasis on सूर्योपासना । However, there is a separate उपपुराणम् by name सौरपुराणम् । It describes the holy places of उत्कलदेशः (Orissa). There is an appendix to this पुराणम् known as ब्रह्मोत्तरपुराणम् ।

8. ब्रह्मवैवर्तपुराणम् (18,000 verses) - It was originally narrated by सावर्णिः to नारदः, but the extant पुराणम् is narrated by नारायणऋषिः to नारदः । It narrates the events occurred in रथन्तरकल्पः-period. The book is divided into four sections – ब्रह्मखण्डः, प्रकृतिखण्डः, विघ्नेश्वरखण्डः and कृष्णजन्मखण्डः ।

As the name suggests, this पुराणम् expounds the theory that the universe is an illusory transformation of ब्रह्मन्, the Supreme Being. The episode of राधा and श्रीकृष्णः is described in detail. Lord कृष्णः is ब्रह्मन् and राधा is माया which is inseparable from Him. गोलोकः is their abode, which is beyond वैकुण्ठम् । Also, it contains various कवच-s like कृष्णकवचम्, शिवकवचम्, सूर्यकवचम्, लक्ष्मीकवचम्, शिवराजस्तवः । Further the story of Lord गणेशः getting elephant-head, story of शिवः and पार्वती are also described. We also find detailed description of कृष्णावतारः, रासलीला, बाणासुरकथा etc..

9. ब्रह्माण्डपुराणम् (12,200 verses) - It is called so on account of the description of the primeval golden egg, which evolved into the Universe later. This is of compilation nature and includes detailed description of creation of cosmos, discussion about the time as a dimension and details of कल्पः and युगः, aspects of religious geography and in this context

description of जम्बूद्वीपः and भारतवर्षः, and certain other locations identified as islands and landmasses like अनुद्वीपः, केतुमालावर्षः, description of certain dynasties like the houses of भरतः, पृथुः and अध्यात्मरमायणम् with seven parts.

10. मार्कण्डेयपुराणम् (9,000 verses) - This is considered to be one of the oldest पुराण-s, since it describes stories related the Vedic deities like सूर्यः, अग्निः । It is in the form of a dialogue between the sage जैमिनिः, and the sage मार्कण्डेयः and consists of 134 chapters. When the sage जैमिनिः requested मार्कण्डेयः to give answers for his four questions, मार्कण्डेयः referred him to learned four birds in the विन्ध्य mountain. The birds, when approached by the sage, answered to his questions and further narrated the stories of हरिश्चन्द्रः and that of the enmity between the sages वसिष्ठः and विश्वामित्रः ।

It further referred the advice of सुमतिः, also known as जडः to his father about various नरक-s and the story of विषश्चित् and the instructions of मदालसा to the king अलर्कः । Besides, मार्कण्डेयः explains to क्रोष्टुकी about creation, मन्वन्तर-s and the most popular देवीमाहात्म्यम्, also called as दुर्गासप्तशती or चण्डीमाहात्म्यम् ।

11. भविष्यपुराणम् - (14,500 verses) - This gives a prophetic account of the tenth incarnation of Lord विष्णुः and narrates the events occurred in अघोरकल्पः-period. It also describes the future chaotic condition of the universe when there would be change of climate, unusual rains, severe drought and decrease in the moral values of the humans. It furnishes a list of royal dynasties of the past followed by a list of kings predicted to rule in the future.

The भविष्यपुराणम् itself tells us that it consists of five parts (पर्व), but the extant printed edition of the work contains only four parts - ब्राह्मपर्व,

मध्यमपर्व, प्रतिसर्गपर्व and उत्तरपर्व । These four parts have distinctive content and dating.

The greater part of the ब्रह्मपर्व deals with ceremonies and feasts, the duties of castes, some accounts of snake myths, and other matters. It also covers the duties of women, good and bad signs of people, and methods of worshipping ब्रह्मा, गणेशः, स्कन्दः and the Snakes. A considerable section deals with Sun worship in a place called "शाकद्वीपः" which may be a reference to Scythia.

प्रतिसर्गपर्व contains stories about Adam, Noah, Yākuta, Taimurlong, Nadir Shah, Akbar (the emperor of Delhi), Jayacandra and many others.

उत्तरपर्व though nominally attached to the भविष्यपुराणम्, is usually considered to be an independent work, also known as the भविष्योत्तरपुराणम्, and as such is included among the उपपुराण-s. The भविष्योत्तरपुराणम् is primarily a handbook of religious rites with a few legends and myths.

12. वामनपुराणम् – (10,000 verses) This पुराणम् was taught by Lord ब्रह्मा and narrates the events happened in शिवकल्पः-period. This begins with the description of the incarnation of Lord विष्णुः as वामनः but proceeds in glorifying the worship of Lord शिवः and the pilgrim centres related to Lord शिवः । The story of दक्षयागः, the burning of मन्मथः, described in this पुराणम् slightly varies from the descriptions founded in other पुराण-s. The geography of ancient universe consisting of सप्तद्वीप-s is described in detail. As the name suggests, this पुराणम् praises the rule of बलिः and his virtues. Besides it also contains the stories describing कामदहनम्, महिषासुरवधः, शिव-पार्वतीविवाहः, अन्धकवधः, तारकवधः ।

13. वायुपुराणम् (24,000 verses) - The वायुपुराणम् was told by वायुः and narrates the events occurred in श्वेतकल्पः-period. Since this पुराणम् is mentioned in the महाभारतम् and in हरिवंशः and also by बाणभट्टः in his

हर्षचरितम्, the original version should have existed well before the महाभारतम् period. It glorifies Lord शिवः । The book is divided into four sections - प्रक्रियापादः, उपोद्घातपादः, अनुषङ्गपादः and उपसंहारपादः and contains 112 chapters. Apart from the usual topics of time-division plan, geography of the earth, dynasties of various rulers of the earth, it also describes गयामाहात्म्यम्, श्राद्ध- ceremony and expiatory rites. Besides, music and अलङ्कारः are explained in two chapters.

14. लिङ्गपुराणम् (11,000 verses) - This was narrated by महेश्वरः, present in the अग्निलिङ्गम् at the end of अग्निकल्पः-period. As the name suggests this पुराणम् glorifies the worship of Lord शिवः । It describes लिङ्गोद्भवः form, the manifestations of Lord शिवः, शिवसहस्रनामम् by Lord विष्णुः and the method of शिवः-worship. It also describes the story of नन्दिदेवः, Advaita philosophy of Lord शिवः, पाशुपतव्रतम्, construction of शिवः temples, उमामहेश्वरव्रतम्, शिव-पार्वती-विवाहः and cosmic form of Lord शिवः ।

15. स्कन्दपुराणम् - (81,000 verses) -This is a very big पुराणम् and exists in two recensions. The first recension is divided into seven खण्ड-s and the second recension is divided into six संहिता-s. The birth of the war-god स्कन्दः or सुब्रह्मण्यः and his exploits are described here. The famous सूतसंहिता is part of the संहिता recension of this पुराणम् । This पुराणम् was narrated by Lord स्कन्दः and narrates the events occurred in तत्पुरुषकल्पः-period.

The seven खण्ड-s are - माहेश्वरखण्डः, वैष्णवखण्डः, ब्रह्मखण्डः, काशीखण्डः, अवन्तीखण्डः, नागरखण्डः and प्रभासखण्डः ।

The माहेश्वरखण्डः is sub-divided in to three खण्ड-s - केदारखण्डः, कुमरीखण्डः and अरुणाचलमाहात्म्यम् । The केदारखण्डः describes the destruction of the sacrifice of दक्षप्रजापतिः, अमृतमन्थनम्, the penance of पार्वती, birth of Lord स्कन्दः, killing of तारकासुरः, महाशिवरात्रिमाहात्म्यम् and शिवराज्याभिषेकः ।

Besides, रामावतारः and वामनावतारः are described. The कौमारखण्डः describes the pligirmage of अर्जुनः to holy places , stories of इन्द्रद्युम्नः and नाडिजङ्गः, उलूकोपाख्यानम्, लोमशवृत्तान्तम्, killing of कालनेमिः by Lord विष्णुः, वर्षरिकाख्यानम् and ऐतरेयब्राह्मणकथा । अरुणाचलमाहात्म्यम् describes the gratness of अरुणाचलः ।

वैष्णवखण्डः describes वेङ्कटाचलमाहात्म्यम्, पुरुषोत्तमक्षेत्रमाहात्म्यम्, कार्तिक-मार्गशिरमाहात्म्यम्, अयोध्यामाहात्म्यम्, वासुदेवमाहात्म्यम्, तुलसीमाहात्म्यम्, जालन्ध्रोख्यानम् etc.

ब्रह्मखण्डः contains सेतुमाहात्म्यम्. धर्मारण्यमाहात्म्यम्, चातुर्मास्यमाहात्म्यम्, पञ्चाक्षरमाहात्म्यम्, गोकर्णक्षेत्रमाहात्म्यम्, प्रदोषमहिमा, पैजवनोपाख्यानम् etc.

काशीखण्डः briefly describes the various worlds like सत्यलोकः, यमलोकः, सूर्यलोकः, इन्द्राग्निलोकः, नवग्रहलोकः, सप्तर्षिलोकः, वाराणसीमहिमा, मणिकर्णिका-माहात्म्यम्, दुण्डिराजाजगणप्तिः, बिन्दुमाधवाविर्भावः etc.

अवन्तिखण्डः is divied into two parts - पूरार्द्धः and उत्तरार्द्धः । In पूरार्द्धः, we get the description of ब्रह्मणः पञ्चमुखच्चेदनवर्णनम्, अवन्तीमाहात्म्यम्, गयातीर्थमाहात्म्यम् । The उत्तरार्द्धः is also known as रेवाखण्डः and it describes नर्मदामाहात्म्यम्, वराहकल्पवृत्तान्तम्, कावेरीतीर्थमहिमा, केदारेश्वरतीर्थमाहात्म्यम् etc.

नागरखण्डः describes त्रिशङ्कुकथा and some pilgrimage centres and holy waters.

प्रभासखण्डः describes प्रभासक्षेत्रमहिमा, अर्बुदखण्डमाहात्म्यम्, द्वारकामाहात्म्यम् etc.

16. अग्निपुराणम् (16,000 verses) - This पुराणम् was narrated by अग्निः to वसिष्ठः and narrates the events occurred in ईशानकल्पः-period. It contains 383 chapters. After describing मत्स्यावतारः and कूर्मावतारः, it describes the story of रामायणम् in 7 chapters and the महाभारतम् in 4 chapters which includes कृष्णावतारः and बुद्धावतारः । Apart from the usual topics of creation of the universe and dynasties of solar and lunar dynasties, it describes the mode

of worshipping different deities, temple architecture, पवित्रारोहणम्, जीर्णोद्धारणम्, Astrology, Sanskrit grammar, prosody, श्राद्धकल्पः, धर्मशास्त्रम्, राजधर्मः, आयुर्वेदः, अथशास्त्रम्, गजशास्त्रम्, various व्रत-s and various expiatory rites.

17. मत्स्यपुराणम् (20,000 verses) - This was narrated by Lord विष्णु: in the form of the great Fish to मनुः, the first king and narrates the events of the first seven कल्प:-period. Since the list of future kings end with the kings of आन्ध्र:-dynasty and does not mention गुप्त-kings, scholars are of the opinion that this पुराणम् might belong prior to 3rd cen.A.D.

The पुराणम् contains 291 chapters. and describes the life of सत्यव्रतः or मनुः who is also the son of the Sun God - सूर्यः । However, Its main content is the description of the deluge that follows and the manner in which Lord मत्स्यः directs मनुः and his family and a handful of others to safety, and then reveals the Vedas to him, and the norms of the Vedic way of life. It also describes primary creation, geography of the earth, geneology of some sages, the dynasty of वृष्णिः, stories of पृथुः, ययाति:-देवयानी-शर्मिष्ठा, अमृतमन्थनकथा, श्यमन्तकमणिकथा, त्रिपुरदाहकथा, अन्धकवधकथा, सत्यवान्-सावित्रीकथा, श्रीकृष्णचरितम्, birth of स्कन्दः, killing of तारकासुरः, various व्रत-s, glory of प्रयागः, राजधर्मः, नृसिंहावतारः, वामनावतारः, श्राद्धकल्पः, various gifts etc. Besides, वास्तुविद्या and iconography are also explained.

18. कूर्मपुराणम् (17,000 verses) - This पुराणम् was narrated by Lord विष्णु: in the form a tortoise to the gods and narrates the events occurred in लक्ष्मीकल्प:-period. This पुराणम् is divided into two parts - पूर्वभागः (53 chapters) and उत्तरभागः (46 chapters). The पूर्वभागः describes the creation, general time-division-plan, दक्षयागविनाशः, dynasties of some ऋषि-s, solar and lunar dynasties, glory of वाराणसी and प्रयागः, details of 14 worlds and

geography of the earth, nine islands etc. This part also describes the 1008 names of goddess पार्वती ।

The first eleven chapters of उत्तरभागः is known as ईश्वरगीता and chapters 12 is known as व्यासगीता । Besides some miscellaneous topics like duties of the people of the four modes of life, expiatory rites, श्राद्धकल्पः, glory of नर्मदा river and the dissolution of the universe.

उपपुराण-S - There are 18 उपपुराण-s which are important only next to महापुराण-s. They are - 1. सनत्कुमारपुराणम् 2. नृसिंहपुराणम् 3. नारदीयपुराणम् 4. शिवपुराणम् 5. दुर्वासपुराणम् 6. कपिलपुराणम् 7. मानवपुराणम् 8. औशनसपुराणम् 9. वरुणपुराणम् 10. कालिकापुराणम् 11. साम्बपुराणम् 12. नन्दिपुराणम् 13. सौरपुराणम् 14. पराशरपुराणम् 15. आदित्यपुराणम् 16. महेश्वरपुराणम् 17. देवीभागवतपुराणम् and 18. वसिष्ठपुराणम् ।

नरसिंहपुराणम् - The extant text contains 68 chapters. Apart from furnishing short genealogical list of solar and lunar dynasties, it describes the ten incarnations of Lord विष्णुः । This पुराणम् also describes creation and the सप्तद्वीप-s and the birth of अगस्त्यः and वसिष्ठः as sons मित्रावरुणः । Chapters 57-61 of this work is also found as an independent work, the हारीतसंहिता or लघुहारीतसंहिता । It contains one of the three versions of the यमगीता (other two versions are found in the विष्णुपुराणम् and the अग्निपुराणम्), मृत्युञ्जयस्तोत्रम् by मार्कण्डेयः and यमाष्टकम् ।

शिवपुराणम् - According to some scholars this forms part of वायुपुराणम् । This was told by वायुः and glorifies Lord शिवः । Since Gupta kings are mentioned, the redaction might have been done somewhere around 5th or 6th cen.A.D.

This पुराणम् is divided into seven संहिता-s - विघ्नेश्वरसंहिता, रुद्रसंहिता, शतरुद्रीयसंहिता, कोटिरुद्रसंहिता, उमासंहिता, कैलाससंहिता and वायवीयसंहिता । In

विश्वेश्वरसंहिता, the glory of शिवलिङ्गम्, रुद्राक्षः, method of worship of पार्थिवलिङ्गम् are described.

रुद्रसंहिता is divided into five खण्ड-s - सृष्टिखण्डः, सतीखण्डः, पार्वतीखण्डः, कुमारखण्डः and युद्धखण्डः । सृष्टिखण्डः describes Lord शिव-worship, manifestations of Lord रुद्रः, friendship of Lord शिवः with कुबेरः and the departure of Lord शिवः to कुबेरः । In सतीखण्डः, the story of सतीदेवी, her marriage with Lord शिवः, the destruction of दक्षयागः, Lord शिवः favouring दक्षः with the head of he-goat. In पार्वतीखण्डः, the story of पार्वतीदेवी, her penance, the effort of कामदेवः and his destruction, her marriage with Lord शिवः and revival of कामदेवः by Lord शिवः are described. In कुमारखण्डः, the birth of कार्तिकेयः, killing of तारकासुरः, birth of गणेशःg In युद्धखण्डः, त्रिपुरदाहकथा, जलन्धरवधकथा, शङ्खचूडवधकथा, अन्धकवधकथा, गजासुरवधकथा, बाणासुरकथा are described.

शतरुद्रीयसंहिता describes the eight forms of रुद्रः like भैरवः, शर्वः etc. कोटिरुद्रीयसंहिता describes the greatness of द्वादशज्योतिर्लिङ्ग-s, and contains शिवसहस्रनामम् । उमासंहिता explains general subjects like the description of various hells, greatness of penance, charity, geography of the earth, जम्बूद्वीपः, seven continents, creation of देव-s, 14 मन्वन्तर-s, श्राद्धकल्पः, and killing of धूम्रलोचनः, चण्ड-मुण्ड-रक्तबीजासुराः । कैलाससंहिता describes the form of ओङ्कारः, शिवः-worship, interpretation of eight names of शिवः and adoration of शिवः । वायवीयसंहिता describes the creation of the universe, rescue of he universe from पातालः by वराहः, manifestations of शिवः and शक्तिः, glory of भस्मः, discourse on शिवतत्त्वम् by वायदेवः and पाशुपतव्रतम् ।

कपिलपुराणम् - It contains 21 chapters. It is in the form of narration by the sage कपिलः to the king शल्यजित् । It mainly describes the greatness of holy places of उत्कलक्षेत्रम्, पुरुषोत्तमक्षेत्रम्, विरजाक्षेत्रम्, मैत्रेयवनम् and एकाम्बतीर्थः । It also describes the shrines of Lord शिवः, Lord विष्णुः, Lord सूर्यः and goddess

दुर्गा in and around Orissa. The ज्ञानयोगः is described in the end chapter of this पुराणम् ।

कालिकापुराणम् - The extant text contains 98 chapters with over 9000 stanzas and it glorifies the worship of the goddess काली in her manifold forms such as देवी, महामाया, गिरिजा, भद्रकाली, कामाख्या । This text describes in detail the rivers and mountains at कामरूपतीर्थः and mentions the कामाख्यामन्दिरम् । Hence scholars consider this work might have been composed Assam region.

साम्बपुराणम् - The extant text is in 84 chapters. The whole narrative is presented as a conversation between the king बृहद्रथः of इक्ष्वाकु dynasty and the sage वसिष्ठः । Initial chapters describes the cure of the disease of साम्बः, son of Lord कृष्णः by the worship of Lord सूर्यः in the temple constructed by him at मित्रवनम् on the banks of the river चन्द्रभागा । It also narrates the story of bringing the eighteen Maga Brāhmins from शाकद्वीपः by साम्बः and appointing them as the priests of the Surya temple in Mitravana.

Besides, the पुराणम् contains a number of narratives dealing with creation, details of solar system, eclipses, geography of the earth, description of सूर्यः and his attendants, construction of images of these deities, rites and rituals and charity.

सौरपुराणम् - The extant text have 69 chapters. It is part of the ब्रह्मपुराणम् । It is proclaimed by Lord सूर्यः and eulogises Lord शिवः and goddess पार्वती । This text praises वाराणसी and describes its various sacred places and तिङ्ग-s. This text also describes the story of पुरुरवस् and ऊर्वशी । It also deals with देवी-worship, merits of दानम् (charity), वत-s (vows).

देवीभागवतम् - Both देवीभागवतम् and श्रीमद्भागवतम् contain 18,000 verses spread into 12 स्कन्ध-s. Further some consider that श्रीमद्भागवतम् was composed by

वोपदेवः around 12th cen.A.D. and देवीभागवतम् is to be considered as महापुराणम् and not as उपपुराणम् । This पुराणम् gives more importance to the worship of शक्तिः or देवी । The contents in brief is as follows : स्कन्धः-1 narrates the story of killing of मधुः and कैटभः by Lord विष्णुः and the story of पुरुरवस् । स्कन्धः-2 narrates the story of the sages पराशरः and व्यासः and the destruction of यदुवंशः, death of परीक्षित्, सर्पयागः by जनमेजयः and the अस्तीकोपाख्यानम् । स्कन्धः- 3 describes देवीभुवनेश्वरी and the stories of सत्यव्रतः, विश्वामित्रः, the रामायणम् and also describes the worship of देवी by श्रीरामः । स्कन्धः -4 mainly describes कृष्णावतारः । स्कन्धः -5 describes the killing of महिषासुरः, धूम्रलोचनः, चणः, मुण्डः and शुम्भनिशुम्भौ । स्कन्धः 6 describes the stories of वृत्रासुरः, शुनःशेषः, हैहय-s and नहुषः । स्कन्धः- 7 describes the solar and lunar dynasties and the stories of च्यवनः-सुकन्या-शर्यातिः, हरिश्चन्द्रः, sacred places related to देवी, । This also contains देवीगीता and the method of worship of देवी स्कन्धः - 8 gives elaborate description of the geography of the earth the नवद्वीप-s and वर्ष-s ध्रुवमण्डलः, seven lower regions, hells, sins and punishments therefor. स्कन्धः-9 describes the worship of शक्तिः, worship of तुलसी, the stories of शङ्खचूडः and महालक्ष्मीः । स्कन्धः - 10 describes the stories of various मनु-s. स्कन्धः- 11 describes the daily routine and स्कन्धः- 11 contains गायत्रीकवचम्, गायत्रीहृदयम् and गायत्रीसहस्रनामम् ।
